

Numbers (continued from a study on Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus.)

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Table of Contents

Numbers 1 — Numbers 3: 51.....	1
Numbers 4: 1 — Numbers 8: 26.....	3
Numbers 9: 1 — Numbers 12: 16.....	8
Numbers 13: 1 — Numbers 16: 35.....	12
Numbers 16: 36 — Numbers 19: 22.....	17
Numbers 20: 1 — Numbers 22: 41.....	21
Numbers 23: 1 — Numbers 26: 65.....	26
Numbers 27: 1 — Numbers 36: 13.....	30

Numbers 1 — Numbers 3: 51.

As we pass to the consideration of the Book of Numbers we note that there is no real division between it and Leviticus, as indicated by the fact that the first word is, "And."

In a little over a year from the Exodus there had to be a numbering of the people. When we come to Numbers 26 we find there had to be another numbering just before they entered the land; and from these two occasions the book gets its name. It is the Book however in which we get details of the journeyings of the people in the wilderness. If it opens at the end of the first year in the wilderness after the law had been given, it closes with the people on the border of the promised land at the end of the forty years.

As a prelude to their journeys several things had to take place. The first of these we find in Numbers 1. God would take an account of His people, and more particularly of the men from twenty years old and upward, who were "able to go forth to war." We must remember that God's plan was to carry them straight into the land of promise, though "not through the way of the land of the Philistines although that was near" (Ex. 13: 17). The people who from their very beginning had seen no war were not to face it within a few days of their deliverance; yet they had to be prepared for it. Indeed Amalek attacked them within a couple of months and came under God's undying curse for so doing. As yet the sin recorded in Numbers 13 and Numbers 14 had not taken place, and had God's original plan not been set aside the conflict in the land would soon have been upon them.

Our chapter records that as a preliminary a "head" or prince of each tribe was selected. The choice was not left to the people, or even to Moses. The word to him was, "These are the names of the men that shall stand with you" God chose His own leader for each tribe, and this may usefully remind us that God today chooses His own servants and leaders, and does not submit the matter to a popular vote.

These men, expressed by name, then assisted in the census. All had to be enrolled, when "they declared their pedigrees after their families," so that every man counted was without a doubt a genuine child of Israel. A present-day application of this lies on the surface. The test today is not that of natural descent but of spiritual. Even a Nicodemus whose natural pedigree could not be impeached, had to

discover that the necessary spiritual pedigree would only be his as he was "born of the Spirit." In Philippians 3, we see that Paul, who was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," not a drop of Gentile blood having come into his pedigree, counted all to be loss that he might have Christ as his gain and be "found in Him." To be "in Christ" is the pedigree of supreme value.

The total that were numbered amounted to 603,550, as we are told in verse 46. We were told in Exodus 12: 37, 38, that about 600,000 men beside children left Egypt, and also a "mixed multitude" went with them. In this census the mixed multitude were eliminated and we have more detailed and accurate figures. Since all males under twenty and all females were omitted, we are safe in assuming that the host must have numbered over two millions.

Also the tribe of Levi was wholly excluded from this numbering. In Numbers 3 we get the reason for this. As a tribe they were to be set apart wholly for the service of God, and out of their midst came the family chosen for the priesthood. This fact indeed comes out in the closing verses of the first chapter. They were to serve the tabernacle, while the children of Israel were to pitch their tents in relation to it, at a certain distance; the Levites pitching theirs more closely round about it, as keeping it in charge.

We may say therefore that God not only called the **warriors** who were to take possession of the land but also the **workers** who were to take charge of His sanctuary, and the Aaronic family, who were to be the **worshippers**. But though the three callings were separate in Israel, the Christian of today finds them coalesced in himself, though the occasions of their exercise be separate. The Apostle Paul was called to be the pattern saint, and we certainly see in him the worshipper, the worker, and the warrior, as the occasion suited.

The people having been numbered, we learn in Numbers 2 that each tribe had its appointed place, when there were stationary periods and they pitched their tents. We notice in the first place that the tabernacle, where was to be seen the cloud indicating the presence of God, was at the centre of everything. So much so that it could be truly said that when Israel was gathered together in a state of repose there was the token of the presence of God in the midst of them. It was visible as befitted that dispensation. It was not so manifest to them, as it is to us today, that "the things which are seen are temporal." Our attention is to be fixed on the unseen things which are eternal. The presence of God amongst His people today is not visible; nevertheless if the church of God be convoked, and the indwelling Holy Spirit acting unhindered in power, an unbeliever coming in would be constrained to confess, "that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14: 25). We have also that great word of our Lord "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20).

In verse 2 the words, "far off," must be noted. It is true of course that in Ephesians we read of Gentiles being "far off" in contrast to Jews, who were "nigh." But Israel's nearness was relative only — in contrast to the distance in which Gentiles dwelt. Priests and Levites pitched their tents round about the tabernacle and the people had to remain on the fringe of things, for there was always fear of wrath coming upon them, as stated in verse 53 of Numbers 1. The whole system was evidently designed to show that, "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest" (Heb. 9: 8).

Though the tribe of Levi had been severed from the rest, the division of the tribe of Joseph into two maintained twelve as their number so that on each side of the tabernacle three tribes pitched their tents. The group under Judah faced toward the entrance into the court. That under Ephraim was on the west side, and therefore nearest to the holy place with the cloud of the Divine Presence. This explains the reference in Psalm 80, to God shining forth "before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh." We notice that the order in which the tribes were to march, when they set forth on their journeys, was

commanded by God, equally with the order of their tents, when they rested. Arrangements were not left to their discretion or desires. Had they disobeyed, under the mistaken notion that they knew of some better order, they would simply have produced **disorder**.

In this we see a typical lesson for us. In 1 Corinthians 14, we have the Apostle Paul instructing as to order in the Christian assembly, and saying that what he has written "are the commandments of the Lord." Much disorder has been produced by the setting aside or ignoring of these commandments.

In Numbers 3 we get details of God's order as to the tribe of Levi. This tribe was taken by God for the service of His house, under the hand of the priests, instead of all the firstborn throughout the tribes, which He had claimed for Himself. Levi had three sons, Gershon, Kohath and Merari, and each of them became the head of a section of the tribe. To each section was allotted a special service in connection with the tabernacle, and each had their tents in a specified position round the tabernacle. Nothing was left to their own devising.

Out of Kohath came Aaron and the priestly family, and the sons of Kohath had special charge of the ark and the other vessels of the sanctuary. Kohath was to pitch tent on the south side of the sanctuary, and Aaron and the priests together with Moses had to dwell on the east side, facing the entrance to the court, keeping charge there, with strangers excluded under the penalty of death.

One thing more we notice in Numbers 3. When the census was taken, the number of the firstborn in Israel exceeded the number of the Levites by 273. These God claimed equally with the 22,000 for whom a Levite was found as a substitute, and hence five shekels apiece had to be paid for these as redemption money. According to Exodus 13 the firstborn were to be redeemed at their birth. In our chapter the principle of redemption as the preliminary to the service of God is again emphasized. Whether the Levites during Israel's history realized that it was only as redeemed people that they were brought into the service of God, may perhaps be open to question, but we should not miss this fact, which is typically set forth here.

The redemption money was handed to Aaron for the service of God, showing that it met His claims upon the redeemed. Let us never forget that as redeemed we belong to God, and that upon this fact is based the life of service to His Name, to which we are committed.

Numbers 4: 1 — Numbers 8: 26.

In chapter 4 we have details as to the service of the Levites in connection with the sanctuary, and also details of the work of the priests, particularly when the camp was in movement. The Levites were divided into three groups under the leadership of Kohath, Gershon and Merari respectively, though the first of these groups was controlled by Aaron's son Eleazar and the second and third by his son, Ithamar.

It was exclusively the work of the priests to prepare the contents of the tabernacle for transit. No eyes but theirs were to gaze upon the ark and the other holy objects and vessels that were there. No hands but theirs were to place upon them the suitable coverings. Only when covered by the priests were the Kohathites to lift them. If these objects, which were but the shadows of the good things to come in Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit, were only exposed to priestly eyes, we may take to heart the lesson that the far holier Reality, now revealed to us, is only apprehended as we take up our priestly privileges in the power of the Spirit. Apart from this we may attempt to scrutinize, but only to our own undoing.

As regards the coverings, the ark was alone in this respect, that the veil which divided the holiest from the holy place was placed immediately upon it. When the tabernacle was stationary the veil

separated the ark from all beside; when in movement it completely covered it; and its significance is fixed for us in Hebrews 10: 20 "the veil, that is to say, His flesh" Veiled in flesh, the true "Ark" moved amongst men.

But over this was to be placed a covering of badgers' skins, and again over this a cloth of blue. Badger's skins would present a rough surface but be very impervious and protective to the holy things beneath, while blue, the heavenly colour, was what met the eye. As a type this is significant, for in our Lord the protective element was essential to Himself — beneath the surface, so to speak — and hence nothing marred the heavenly beauty He displayed before men.

In the cases of other vessels the blue was inside and the badgers' skins were on the surface to preserve from defilement. This was so even with the candlestick, typical of the seven-fold light of the Spirit, who is essentially holy even as Christ is, but who has never become incarnate, but now indwells redeemed **men**. There was a further difference since on the table of shewbread was to be spread a cloth of scarlet as well as one of blue, and on the brazen altar was to be no cloth of blue but one of purple. Scarlet is generally held to be indicative of human glory and purple of imperial dominion. The shewbread loaves spoke of God's perfect administration for the earth, yet to be realized through the twelve tribes of Israel, and there human glory will most brightly shine.

How fitting also that the altar, which spoke of the sufferings and death of the Saviour, should be covered with purple under the badger skins, for His universal dominion will be acknowledged by all to rest for its foundation upon His death, as Revelation 5 so clearly shows. The only One, who is worthy to receive the power, which is grasped at by the "beasts" of Revelation 13, is "the Lamb that was slain." To this we all add our worshipful "Amen" even today.

The Levites were to serve from the age of thirty to the age of fifty; that is, their years of maturity and physical strength were to be devoted to energetic service, for it was theirs to set up the tabernacle and take it down, as we saw at the end of Numbers 1, as well as carry it and its contents when the people journeyed. When we come to Numbers 8, we shall find further reference to this.

As we survey the whole of Numbers 4, we cannot but be struck by the way in which God ordered everything in connection with His wilderness house, leaving nothing to man's preference or choice. It reminds us at once of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, where we learn that in God's present house, which is "the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3: 15), the Spirit of God is sovereign, acting under the lordship of Christ, and that He divides "to every man severally **as He will**." We are only right as we serve under the direction of the Spirit of God. It is not for us to pick and choose.

Numbers 5, which follows, instructs as to the removing of defilement from the camp which surrounded the tabernacle. The directions come under three heads.

First, the removal of persons who may be defiled by leprosy, or by bodily issue, or by contact with death. Leprosy is a type of that "sin in the flesh," of which Romans 8: 3 speaks. The "issue" reminds us of the words of our Lord, "that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matt. 15: 11). Man being corrupted by sin, everything that comes out of him is defiled and defiling; and then "sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death," as the Apostle James tells us.

A second source of defilement meets us in verses 5-10. Trespass against the Lord and one's neighbour is contemplated. This was to be met by confession and by restitution with a fifth part added. This regulation has a very definite voice for us today. Confession was the first thing, but by itself it was not enough. There is, we fear, today much defilement, even among the true saints of God, springing from trespass, in speech as well as in act, all of which is grieving to the Holy Spirit and a great

hindrance to spiritual blessing. Not infrequently has a time of awakening and conversion amongst sinners been preceded by a time of revival amongst saints, when **conviction** of trespasses against their Lord and their fellow-Christians has seized them, followed by **confession** and **restitution**, as far as lay in their power.

Thirdly, we have, from verse 11 to the end of the chapter, what is spoken of as "the law of jealousies." The camp was to be holy as the dwelling place of God, and if jealousy as to his wife entered the mind of a man, it was not to be left to rankle there but to be tested, whether based on fact or fancy. If true, judgment fell on the woman; if false, she was free, and demonstrated to be so. We may see here a type of that which marked Israel and Jerusalem, indicated for instance in Ezekiel 16. Possibly too this was in the mind of the Apostle Paul when he wrote 2 Corinthians 11: 2.

Israel had to learn that their Jehovah was "a jealous God," and we Christians have to remember that the Lord Jesus, in whom our faith reposes, is jealous of the affections and devotions of His saints, and something of that righteous and holy jealousy was in the heart of the Apostle as he thought of the way in which the Corinthians were unequally yoking themselves with the men of the world, as to which he warned them in 1 Corinthians 6. It was the loss of "first love" for Christ that helped on all the evils that developed in the Churches of Revelation 2 and 3.

In Numbers 4 then, we have the **order** of Levitical service, appointed of God, for the removing and setting up of the tabernacle; and in Numbers 5, the **removal** of that which would **defile** the camp in the midst of which God's habitation was placed. Now, in Numbers 6, we have the very opposite, since he, who undertook the Nazarite's vow, placed himself in the most **holy**, or **separated**, position open to an Israelite. The meaning of the name, Nazarite, is "a separated one."

According to our chapter a man might make a vow to separate himself unto the Lord for a certain period, and if so, he placed himself under a threefold obligation, which he had to observe "all the days of his separation." The only actual case, recorded in the Old Testament, is that of Samson, and he was to be a life-long Nazarite from his birth, as we see in Judges 13: 5. He did not take the vow upon him it was placed upon him by God, and his supernatural strength depended upon his faithful observance of it. The story of how he was seduced from it, we all know.

It would appear that John the Baptist was from birth under this or a similar vow. In Luke 1: 15, abstinence from wine or strong drink is mentioned, but not the two other things. Here we have a contrast. The strength of Samson was physical; John's strength was spiritual. The one lost his Nazariteship the other retained it until he died a martyr's death.

In the first place the Nazarite undertook to abstain from the fruit of the vine in all its forms. In those regions the vine grew in abundance, and nothing was more common and ordinary as drink than wine. Under this vow of separation to God a man had to make himself quite peculiar by declining it in all its forms.

The second stipulation was that he must let the hair of his head grow without cutting it. This was something purely external. Only the friends and acquaintances of the man would know that he did not touch the fruit of the vine in any of its forms, but as he went about anyone could see the peculiar feature of his long hair.

Thirdly, he was to avoid all contact with a dead body. Much was made of death in those days, and great were the lamentations and the mournings. Not to come nigh even when father or mother, brother or sister died, was separation from life and its ordinary ways indeed! But the Nazarite was a separated man! Separated to his God.

These things clearly have a voice to us, though we are not under the law. We may make in the first place a general application. The Christian has been called out of the world system to be for God and to find his joy and exhilaration in heavenly things; setting his mind and affection "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3: 2). He does not drink of this world's pleasures.

Again, the Christian does not seek the glory of the world. We are told in 1 Corinthians 11: 14, 15, that while long hair is a glory to a woman, it is a shame to a man, since for him it betokened an absence of that virile push and assertion of leadership which is characteristic of the man as distinguished from the woman. Paul's word to the Christian is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4: 5). The word translated "moderation" means simply, "yieldingness." Knowing his Lord to be near, the Christian can yield to others the glory that men covet.

Lastly, we have to recognize how many things in the world there are which have about them the corruption of death, and, what is even worse, that we carry about in ourselves the flesh, which is like a dead body in its corruption. Hence that word of the Apostle in Romans 7: 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" — or, "this body of death?" The answer to the question is, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Under His sweet and gracious power we are delivered from the dead body within, as well as the dead bodies in the world without.

But having made this general application we must remember that a special and particular one may also be made. Even today the Lord may call some of His servants to a path of special consecration, though not on the legal basis of a vow. The apostles were so called; pre-eminently so the Apostle Paul who was, "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. 1: 1). The same thing might be said, though in a lesser degree, of a servant like Timothy (see, 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6). Such a special call involves a more complete disentanglement from the ordinary and un sinful pleasures of life than is known by the average Christian. In saying this, we think of 2 Timothy 2: 4. No man thus called in a special way to enter into the wars of the Lord, "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life."

Numbers 6 details for us the offerings to be made; first, if the Nazarite failed in his vow; and second, when his vow was completed without failure. In the former case, the earlier days of his vow were lost, and he had to begin all over again. This was law, but thus it is not under grace. Personally we think that what is recorded in Acts 21: 20-26, indicates a lapse in his consecration to Christ on the part of Paul, but his years of separation and devotion to his Lord before that were not treated as a lost thing.

Observing wholehearted devotion and separation from earthly joys, such as was seen in Paul, an unspiritual believer might say, What a straitened and gloomy life! How like living in a monastery, but without monastery walls! Nothing would be more mistaken. It is a life of joy and blessing. Why, this very chapter in Numbers, which gives us the Nazarite vow, ends with the special blessing of Jehovah. It is not indeed a blessing confined to the Nazarite, though such would be included, but rather on the children of Israel, considered as a people upon whom the name of the Lord was to be placed.

What strikes us about the blessing is that, in a day when blessing was so largely connected with earthly and material things, it is so bound up with spiritual things. The shining of Jehovah's face and the lifting up of His countenance surely signifies that Israel might be kept in the **light of the revelation of God**, as known in their midst. Then they would experience His **grace** though they were in the dispensation of law, and they would enjoy His **peace**. Such blessings may be ours today, but in a far larger and richer way, since God is now revealed in Christ.

Numbers 7, a lengthy one, records the offerings of the princes of Israel, representing the twelve tribes, when Moses had set up the tabernacle and anointed it. Coming in at this point, it reminds us that if it is God's thought to bless His people richly — as at the end of chapter 6 — it is equally His thought

that His people should respond by their offerings to Him, all of them in connection with the carrying and work of His sanctuary. Verses 2-9 give us the collective offering for the transport of the sanctuary, wagons and oxen, which were given to the sons of Gershon and of Merari. The holy vessels, including the ark, were to be borne on the shoulders of the sons of Kohath, so no wagons or oxen were needed for them. It was this that David overlooked, when he went to bring back the ark after it had been in the hands of the Philistines, and hence the disaster with Uzzah. Later David recognized his mistake, as we find recorded in 1 Chronicles 15: 13. God had to be sought "after the due order."

The rest of the chapter is occupied with the separate offering of the princes in connection with "the dedication of the altar." Each offered separately on his day, but each offered the same things. Vessels were presented — chargers, bowls, spoons — but none of them were empty; they contained fine flour mingled with oil as a meat offering, or incense. But whether for a meat offering or for burnt or sin offering, all that they presented spoke in some way of Christ. Doubtless they did not know this, but it is our privilege to discern it.

The last verse tells us that these offerings made, Moses went into the tabernacle to speak with God, and then he heard God speaking to him from the mercy seat. Numbers 8 begins the recital of the further things that God had to say.

The first word was instruction to Aaron as to lighting the seven lamps on the candlestick, which had been made, as verse 4 tells us, according to the instructions recorded in Exodus 25. Then, from verse 5 to the end of the chapter, is the record of the purifying and consecration of the Levites. It is worthy of note that of all the sacred furniture of the tabernacle the candlestick only is mentioned here, and the shining of its light has a typical significance.

Numbers 7 has shown us that God may be served by the **offerings** of His people, and that God takes notice of these offerings in an individual way. They were not all lumped together — a good many verses might have been saved had they been — each prince, each tribe is named, and full details of each offering given. Then, God may be served by the **activities** of His people. This is seen in the Levites, as recorded in Numbers 8. But all will be estimated by God in the light of the sanctuary; that is, the light of the Holy Spirit. And further, we must remember that the light of the Spirit is to shine through us, His people. The Spirit of Christ is to shine out in both what we offer and in the active service we are privileged to render. Only as this is so will the Lord's words, in Matthew 5: 16, be fulfilled in us.

God's claim on the Levites, inasmuch as they were substituted for the firstborn, is reiterated in our chapter. They were servants to Him, but first they had to be cleansed. They were not bathed all over, as were the priests, but only sprinkled with "water of purifying," and then not only were they to wash their clothes but also "shave all their flesh." This should teach us that we need not only the cleansing of the word before we engage actively in the Lord's service but also the removal of the things that mark and distinguish us as men in the flesh. When this is observed we are cleansed **from ourselves** and fit for service.

Then the Levites had to present their offerings, the whole congregation of the people having identified themselves with them by laying on of hands. The force of this rite is clearly shown here, and by it the people identified themselves with the service, so that they were regarded as serving their God in the service of the Levites.

The closing verses show that Levitical service began at twenty-five years of age, and after five preliminary years, full service began at thirty and continued until fifty. After fifty their heavy labours ended but they still ministered and kept the charge. Old age did not end their privilege of service but

only altered its character.

We have to recognize that today every saint is called to Levitical service as well as priestly service. Let us humbly confess how short — how very far short — we come in both directions.

Numbers 9: 1 — Numbers 12: 16.

The instructions as to the Passover, which occupy the first half of chapter 9, were given to Moses at the beginning of the first month of the second year; that is, about a month before that which we have been considering, as is evident, if we compare the first verse of our chapter with the first verse of Numbers 1. The Passover commemorated the basis on which the redemption of the people rested. That came first, and the numbering of the people followed. Thus in type was the fact emphasized that God only numbers and counts as His, those who have been redeemed.

Verses 2-5 enforce obedience to all that God had commanded as to it. The time and manner of it had been laid down, and what had been laid down was to stand for all time. This principle of obedience is as true for us who are under grace as it was for Israel under law. One variation only was permitted, as we see in verses 6-8.

Moses knew that he had no authority to vary God's instructions, so he went to the Lord to hear what He had to say. The men in question had been defiled not by their sin but by attending duties in connection with the dead. They were permitted to eat the feast exactly a month later, but observing all the ordinances connected with it. Thus while there was no sanctioning of carelessness, there was provision made for unavoidable duties. The teaching of this we may well take to heart in relation to the Lord's Supper, which was instituted just as the prophetic import of the Passover was to be fulfilled. To miss that by reason of carelessness means spiritual loss; but not so if hindered by duties that are necessary and right.

Another thing comes to light in verse 14. Not only was this provision made for any who were hindered on the due date, but in His kindness God also thought of "the stranger." Such an one might also partake, if he observed all the ordinances. Thus, while under the law God was dealing only with Israel, He kept the door open for any strangers who might have their heart touched and drawn toward Himself. This was a thing that the average Jew was slow to admit, as we see in Peter's words, recorded in Acts 10: 34, 35. Now, in the Gospel, all distinctions have disappeared. There is "no difference," either in guilt or in the richness of the proffered grace, as the Epistle to the Romans declares.

The latter part of the chapter is occupied with the sign of the presence of God in their midst; namely the cloud that descended on the tabernacle on the day of its erection; which cloud had the appearance of fire by night. On the ground of redemption God vouchsafed His presence, and as there is with Him, "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1: 17) we find here the words, "So it was alway." His presence was only forfeited as the result of the apostasy of the people, as we have to learn later on.

Moreover the cloud acted as a sign by which the goings or the stayings of the people were regulated. Such matters were not settled by the votes of the people or by the wisdom of Moses, but by the commandment of the Lord. The cloud might rest for only two days, or it might for a month or even a year. While it rested the people rested. When it moved the people moved. Thus their wilderness journey was regulated by the wisdom of God. Hence the extraordinary features that marked their journey, as noted by Moses at the beginning of Deuteronomy 8, and particularly verse 4.

Have we ever sighed for guidance in our pilgrim way, wishing we had some visible sign to

direct? We have to remember what the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to enforce; namely, that the outward and visible things of Judaism were but shadows, which have given place to the realities that have reached us in Christ, and are known to faith. We have **His Spirit** and **His word**, and if we have that **meekness**, of which Psalm 25: 9 speaks, we shall not lack the over-ruling guidance that we need.

The people needed not only guidance as to when to rest and when to journey; there were times when they needed to congregate together, or when an alarm had to be sounded. Hence the silver trumpets were to be made, and instructions for their use are given in the first ten verses of Numbers 10. Each individual Israelite had his place and responsibilities, yet they were a people who might be assembled together before God. In this sense Stephen spoke of them as the "church" or "assembly in the wilderness" (Acts 7: 37). Further, there might be times when in the land an enemy drew near, and then blowing an alarm, they would be remembered by God.

The prophet Joel gives us an example of both. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain" (Joel 2: 1). Here a powerful adversary was in view as the succeeding verses show. But again, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly" (Joel 2: 15). Here it is a matter of approaching God, as the next verses show. We find similar thoughts in the New Testament. The alarm for conflict is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 14: 8, so the trumpet must give no uncertain sound. In 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, the trumpet of God is to sound to assemble the saints, whether dead or living, to meet the Lord at His coming again.

The instructions about the Passover were given early in the first month of the second year. The people were numbered on the first day of the second month. On the fourteenth day of that second month the men previously disqualified were allowed to eat the Passover. That completed, on the twentieth day the cloud was taken up, as verse 11 says, and the further journeyings of the people began. They left the wilderness of Sinai for the wilderness of Paran. Verses 14-28 give us the order of the tribes and their leaders.

Everything, we notice, was regulated; and the order was **God's order**. Judah led the first three tribes. After them came the bearers of the tabernacle. After the second group of three tribes came the bearers of the sanctuary — the ark and other holy vessels. Thus in the new spot the tabernacle was erected before the ark arrived. Ephraim led the remaining six tribes. These arrangements held good for all the journeyings of the children of Israel, according to verse 28.

In verses 29-32, the relations of the wife of Moses again appear. They were wilderness folk, well versed in its peculiar features, and therefore we can well understand the natural prudence of Moses in asking them to join in their journeys, and be unto them "instead of eyes." It sounded an attractive proposition to both sides. Israel would get very expert human guidance, and they would get a share in all God's goodness that was being showered upon Israel. But if God undertakes to guide His people, the most expert skill and understanding are unnecessary.

The Divine answer to this prudent suggestion of Moses, recorded in verse 33, is very striking. The ark of the Lord with the cloud of His presence left its accustomed place in the midst of the people and went in front to search out the exact resting place for them. Thus not only were their journeyings and their restings controlled, but the very spot for their encampment was indicated. Is God any less careful about the movements and the restings of His saints today? The church was "scattered abroad," in Acts 8: 1, but in Acts 9: 31 we read, "Then had the churches rest," and both things were under the control of the Lord.

The two verses that close the chapter show how fully Moses entered into the significance of this action on God's part. If God acted as the Vanguard of His people, every opposing force would be

scattered and their safety assured. If the cloud rested when the camping place was reached, it meant that He returned to be the centre of the many thousands of Israel. That, and that alone, was the guarantee of their prosperity and blessing.

How great is the contrast as we commence reading Numbers 11. We move from the calm sense of the presence of God, ensuring victory and blessing, and descend to contemplate the people in their unbelief, which gave rise to bitter complaints. What happened at Taberah is recorded in the first three verses, though the particular matter as to which they complained is not mentioned. The people, however, were now definitely under the law that had been given, and had to face its judgment. If we refer back to Exodus 16 and 17, where are recorded their murmurings and complaints before the law was given, we at once see a difference. Then no judgment followed, as was the case here. It furnishes us with an illustration of the statement that, "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5: 13); as also of that other statement of the Apostle, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7: 9).

But even worse was to follow, as we see from verse 4 onwards. The trouble began with the "mixed multitude," that was among them as we were told in Exodus 12: 38. These were people who were not really of Israel though they had attached themselves to them; and amongst these the lusting for the delicacies of Egypt began, and from them it spread through the host.

To corrupt by introducing a mixture is a very common and very successful device of Satan. Directly God called a people out of Egypt to Himself, the "mixed multitude" appears. The same thing we see in principle in Matthew 13. When the good seed of the Word is sown, the enemy immediately sows tares amongst it. Again the Gospel is faithfully preached by Paul, but almost immediately there are "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. 2: 4); and it is not otherwise today. A wholesome word of warning for us is — Beware of the "mixed multitude"!

Soon there was general lamentation throughout the host. The bondage of Egypt was forgotten; its luxuries were remembered? and as they thought of them the manna lost its attraction and was despised. The manna is now more particularly described to us. It was attractive in its colour and taste, but labour had to be expended in gathering it and preparing it for food, whereas Egypt's delicacies were more easily obtained and prepared besides being more varied. To the people the manna seemed monotonous.

The warning for us is very obvious. Christ is the true "bread from heaven," as John 6 so plainly declares, and when the first joy of our spiritual deliverance is passed, it is all too easy to lose our relish for Christ and His things and to hanker after the things of the world that appealed to us in our unconverted days. Then we become discontented, and tired of Christ, and complaining as to the absence of fascinating things that once we enjoyed. For Israel, being under law, judgment was the ultimate result. We are under grace, but nevertheless the Father's chastening in His holy government comes upon us.

Verses 10-15? reveal how deeply all this affected Moses. He was so overwhelmed by a sense of the burden of the people that he forgot that the burden really rested upon his God rather than himself. In verse 15 he asked to die rather than continue to bear the burden, thus doing just what Elijah did centuries after, when he flung himself beneath the juniper tree. Both suffered a collapse in their mind under the burden of the unbelieving people yet both had the honour of appearing in the glory of Christ on the mount of transfiguration. Such is the grace of our God!

Many a servant of God has had the burden of a similar experience, but in lesser measure. We discern it in very large measure in the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Galatians, "My little children? of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4: 19). We may be sure however

that no servant of God can ever rightly say "I am not able to bear all this . . . alone, because it is too heavy for me." We must never leave God out of our reckoning.

Thus the unbelief and grievous sin of the people provoked some breakdown on the part of Moses, but the way in which the Lord condescended in His kindness to meet His fainting servant is very beautiful. Moses should no longer feel lonely, as though he had to bear the weight alone. He was granted human support in the shape of seventy elders of the people, though it was by reason of sharing the spirit that had been upon him that they were able to give the support. In result, they became prophets. Two who shared in the power were out of order as to their location, and this brought to light another striking feature that characterized Moses.

Joshua would have had the two men silenced because of the irregularity that marked their prophesying? but Moses forbid him. Envy might have found a place in the heart of Joshua but it had no place in the heart of Moses. The desire for pre-eminence, which is so rooted in the mind of the natural man, had no place with him. He displayed very clearly that meekness which is attributed to him in verse 3 of the next chapter. When 40 years old he was **not** very meek, as Exodus 2: 12 shows. Now after the 40 years' discipline from God in Midian, he is "**very meek**" though he had become "**very great**" (Ex. 11: 3), in the eyes of the world.

Though so meek, Moses found it hard to accept the pronouncement of the Lord that He would feed the whole community on flesh, not for a day or a week only, but for a whole month; so verses 21 and 22 remind us of the attitude of the disciples when the Lord Jesus challenged them before the feeding of the five thousand. We are all so prone to measure an emergency by human possibilities and to forget what the Lord stated in verse 23. The Lord's hand is not waxed short and His word ever comes to pass, no matter how impossible the thing seems to us. The people had despised the Lord, as stated in verse 20, and even Moses had doubted Him. Yet what He had promised was speedily fulfilled in spite of its seeming improbability.

The quail, is, we understand, a bird of migratory habits, not very strong in its flight and therefore its direction easily affected by wind. The Lord had divided the Red Sea by a strong east wind, and now again His wind blew, and moved not water but birds. In result quails came in such vast numbers as to surround the camp for miles on either side, so that the people could capture them without the slightest difficulty. The people were thus enabled to satisfy to the full their desire for flesh, but as they greedily satisfied their lust, plague broke out amongst them and many died. What they had desired as a blessing became to them a curse. And the damage was not only physical but spiritual also, for we read, referring to this episode, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106: 15).

It looks as if the sad events recorded in Numbers 12 sprang out of what we have just considered — the faint-heartedness of Moses and the prophesying of the seventy elders. The very prominent position accorded to Moses by the Lord had awakened envy in the hearts of both his sister and his brother, and this weakening on his part called it forth. Moreover he had married a woman who was outside the circle of Israel, and this furnished a convenient excuse for their protest; and both of them, especially Miriam, were older than Moses.

Now the Lord had most definitely spoken by Moses. He had revealed His holy law, and Moses was the chosen servant through whom the revelation had been made, and was being made, and that in inspired words. They made the bold claim that Jehovah had equally spoken by them — that their utterances should be accepted as an inspired revelation from Him. A bold claim this! And one that was a great sin, meriting severe punishment, as the sequel shows.

During the church's history, sad to say, similar false claims have been made all too frequently;

and are even made today by men who claim that what they say is to be received as a word inspired of God. When the false claim was made in our chapter, we find the significant remark, "And the Lord heard it." The man Moses being so pre-eminent in meekness, the Lord not only heard but promptly acted in such a way as to vindicate him, and make it very plain that he and he only was His accredited mouthpiece.

It is here that we have also the Divine testimony concerning Moses to the effect that he was, "faithful in all Mine house," which is quoted in Hebrews 3. It is very evident that if God selects a man to be His mouthpiece, in order to convey to others His message in inspired words, faithfulness is a prime necessity. The opposite of meekness is self-assertiveness, and if Moses had not excelled in **meekness**, his tendency would have been to intrude himself and his own thoughts into the words from God. If he had not been **faithful**, he might easily have been diverted, so as to misrepresent what God had really said.

Verses 6 and 7 indicate that Moses was more than a prophet. He was the apostle and mediator of the law covenant, as Galatians 3: 19 shows. This being so, we can see how serious was this sin, in which Miriam was the leader. Aaron followed her, but he was evidently a man too easily influenced by others, as the incident of the golden calf showed. Hence the displeasure of God was manifested against Miriam only, and by an instantaneous act of God she was smitten with leprosy. Aaron confessed their sin and acted as intercessor, for also the cloud had left the tabernacle, which was the sign for the moving of the camp.

We saw in Leviticus 13 the instructions for the detection of leprosy and its cleansing. It is a remarkable fact that the first case in which Aaron had to act was that of his own sister and in regard to a sin in which he himself had been implicated. Miriam was the chief sufferer, but everybody was affected in some degree. Moses, who had been wronged, had to intercede. Aaron had to act. The people were held up in their journey for seven days. The whole episode may remind us of what is stated in 1 Corinthians 12: 26, only that which binds saints together today as one body is far more real and intimate than anything that constituted Israel one nation in the sight of God. And further, if Moses was not to be challenged, how much more are we to regard the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus, as supreme and unchallengeable.

Numbers 13: 1 — Numbers 16: 35.

At the opening of chapter 13 we find the people had moved northward and were camped on the confines of the Promised Land. From that spot, by the commandment of the Lord, a leading man from each tribe, except the tribe of Levi, was sent to search out the land they were to enter. This command evidently had a twofold bearing. In the first place, it was to act as an encouragement and incentive to the people by allowing their representatives to see for themselves the excellence of the land, and report on it. But in the second place, it was to make them realize that there were mighty opponents; so that they must still rely on the power of God. Their faith was to be tested. If they truly believed that nothing but His power had broken Egypt, and brought them out, they would have no difficulty in believing that His power would break all the adversaries in the land, and bring them in.

Now Canaan does not typify heaven, where Christ is. When we enter that blissful place, all conflict and fightings will be over for ever. It does typify the realm of heavenly blessing that is ours in Christ, and which we enter upon at the present time through spiritual conflict. Hence the Epistle to the Ephesians which opens with an unfolding of those "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," ends with the warfare indicated in Numbers 6. It is worthy of note that the recounting of the armour of

God in that chapter is followed by the word, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." We too must realize that to overcome we must be dependent on the power of God.

The word, "southward," in verse 17 may present some difficulty. The solution seems to be that encamped, as they were, close to where the hill country in the south of Judah begins, the spies had to start by going south and then climbing into the mountain region to the south-east of the Dead Sea. Thus, travelling on the east side of Jordan to the far north near to Hamath, and then turning south to return through to Hebron on the west side, they raised no suspicions as to who they were, but appeared to be ordinary travellers.

At this time Hebron was heavily fortified and held by a race of giants, the children of Anak. It was evidently of peculiar strength and antiquity, as the closing words of verse 22 show. Zoan was a chief city of Egypt, and evidently Pharaoh's seat, for twice in Psalm 78 we have reference to the "marvellous things" and the "wonders," that God wrought "in the field of Zoan" (verses 12 and 43). Hebron became the first seat of the Davidic kingdom that God established. So the closing words of verse 22 may remind us that what God purposes antedates anything man establishes however great and glorious in his eyes.

For forty days the land was searched and the men returned with ample evidence of the fertility of the land; that it did indeed flow with milk and honey, and bore fruit of exceptional size. The land was fully what God had declared it to be.

To all this the spies bore witness, yet they laid the chief stress upon the walled-up cities and the imposing greatness of the children of Anak. They stated, truly enough, that they were no match for these giants, but being men of no faith they left God completely out of their thoughts: all of them, that is to say, except Caleb and Joshua. In result they measured themselves against the giants and their cities, and communicated their unbelieving fears to the mass of the people.

In verse 30, Caleb alone is mentioned, though we know from the next chapter that his faith was shared by Joshua. Faith looks not only at the difficulties but also at God, in whose presence difficulties are nothing. Hence his word was, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." When, on the banks of the Red Sea they sang, "All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away . . . Thou shalt bring them in . . ." (Ex. 15: 15-17), the people adopted the language of faith in the enthusiasm of the moment, without possessing the faith. How often have we been like them to this extent, that we have sung hymns expressing Christian experience without really having the experience? Such a thing it is very easy to do.

The effect on the people is recorded in the first four verses of Numbers 14. Their weeping and their words were the plainest declaration of their unbelief. They murmured against the leaders that God had set over them, and insinuated that the Lord had let them down by bringing them out of Egypt to place them in an impossible position. The leadership of Moses had recently been questioned by Miriam, as we saw in Numbers 12; it is now challenged in a far more serious way. They would reject him and elect a captain of their own, to lead them back to Egypt.

In Exodus 32: 4, we read of the making of the **calf**, that they imagined had brought them up out of Egypt. Now they wish to make a **captain** to take them back. Both these evils are brought together very strikingly in Nehemiah 9: 17, 18, but there the order of them is reversed. It looks as if the provocation in this later case was as great as in the former. To reject a servant, whom God has appointed captain, is tantamount to the rejection of God Himself; though rejecting Him by making a golden calf was a cruder proceeding.

Since the days of the calf no crisis had equalled this in gravity. It threw up into relief four men of faith. Aaron's faith had not the strength of the faith of Moses, but nevertheless with Moses he fell on his face before the congregation. He shared here in the meekness of Moses, since for a man to fall on his face before his opponents is virtually to obliterate himself. As a matter of fact they could not have done a more serious thing. Had they risen to their full height before the people, they would have asserted their authority and accepted the challenge themselves. But the rather, they put themselves out of the matter and left God to take up the challenge. Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes the sign of distress and repudiation — and boldly testified to the faithfulness and power of God. God was before their hearts and not the children of Anak. All however to no purpose. The bankruptcy of the people as regards faith was complete.

To this moment Psalm 95 refers, quoted in Hebrews 3 and 4, and there the point is very clearly stressed that **unbelief** lay at the root of all. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." It is necessary to note this, for it shows their case was not one of forfeiting the blessing by backsliding, but of entering professedly into a calling for which they never had faith at all. This is the point of the solemn warnings that have so large a place in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The effacement of Moses cleared the way for God to act, as we see in verses 11 and 12, which plainly indicate the greatness of the sin and what the people deserved. They had provoked the Lord by breaking His law, by rejecting His captain, by disbelieving Him in spite of all the signs He had shown among them. The wages of sin is death, which would have reached them by a pestilence. If God had cut them all off, and maintained a posterity to Abraham according to His promise, by starting afresh through Moses He would have been doing in principle what He did in destroying mankind by the flood, and yet preserving a posterity to Adam through Noah. But would such a seed through Moses have proved any better than the seed through Noah, or better than the seed through Abraham up to date? The answer, which the New Testament gives, is NO. We read, "So then they that are in the flesh **cannot** please God" (Rom. 8: 8).

This offer, which the Lord thus made, must have been a real test to Moses. To become the father of a greater and mightier nation must have been a very attractive proposition. It would have been so to the flesh of any man. This makes his reaction to it very remarkable, and we see his meekness manifesting itself in striking fashion. His main thought was not of himself at all but of God and His glory. The rebellion of the people was primarily against God, but secondarily against himself, yet he thought only of how such a drastic judgment would be interpreted by the Egyptians and other surrounding nations; and in view of this and of the declared longsuffering and mercy of God, he boldly besought **pardon**. His plea prevailed and pardon was granted, as regards the death penalty.

Yet this grievous sin entailed **penalties** in the government of God. Verse 21 begins, "But as truly as I live . . ." which is the formula of an oath. The Epistle to the Hebrews, which records the immutable oath made to Abraham, also records how He swore in His wrath, "They shall not enter into My rest." The men who brought an evil report of the land should never enter it. Moreover the very next day the people were to begin a fresh journey, not into the land but away from it, thus starting a weary pilgrimage of no less than forty years, and verse 29 says, "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness." The whole sad story might be graphically summed up by saying — They rejected their unseen God by making a **calf**: they rejected their visible leader in proposing to elect a **captain**; and in result their **carcasses** fell outside the land of promise.

This solemn sentence applied, as verse 29 indicates, to all of twenty years old and upwards, and the little ones, on whose behalf they specially murmured, were the ones who would enter the land.

Psalm 90, which is a prayer of Moses, alludes to this when he says, "All our days are passed away in Thy wrath . . . the days of our years are three score years and ten . . ." This would apply in very literal fashion to the people we are considering. The judgment on the ten spies fell at **once as** verse 37 shows.

The verses that conclude our chapter also have a very instructive word of warning for us. The action of God's government produced a revulsion of feeling among the people. They now acknowledged that they had sinned, but they wished to **evade the penalty** in God's government of them, and they started to go forward instead of going back. This simply meant disaster. Moses and the ark did not leave the camp, and those of the host who acted thus found that God was not acting on their behalf. They were left to their own resources and were heavily smitten.

If God be for us no one can be effectively against us. The converse of this was put most plainly to the disciples by the Lord Jesus when He said, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). A striking example of it is found in Samson. Immediately he disobeyed, and broke his Nazarite vow, his strength was gone. But illustrations of the fact are everywhere.

The opening words of Numbers 15 are certainly remarkable. The people had just been told that their wilderness sojourn was to be prolonged to forty years, and their self-willed effort to evade this, and push their way in immediately, completely repulsed; and the next thing is the issue of regulations to be effective, "when ye be come into the land of your habitations, **which I give unto you.**" In thus speaking, God made it plain that His purpose concerning them stood firm in spite of all that they had done, and that He would ultimately bring them in. The Lord then spoke particularly of certain subsidiary offerings that were to accompany the major offerings, and also of what was to be offered by way of atonement when anyone sinned through ignorance.

Verse 30 deals with presumptuous sins, in despising the word of the Lord, and no offering is prescribed for such. Then an example of such a presumptuous sin is given in the case of the man who broke the sabbath by gathering sticks. He was put to death. This was undoubtedly judgment of a drastic kind.

What is our mental reaction to it? Many unbelievers would denounce it as unwarrantably severe, just as they would the disastrous results that followed the sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit. But sin is lawlessness — the creature asserting its own will and defying the Creator — and the element of defiance is never more pronounced than when the matter involved is only trivial. If Adam had been **forbidden** every tree save one, instead of being **granted** every tree save one; or if Israel had been in a cold climate, and had not been given bread from heaven, it might have been possible to offer some excuse for both actions. As it was, in both cases the law of God was needlessly defied. To such a case as that before us Hebrews 10: 28 refers. The law was indeed "the ministration of death."

This episode gave rise to the instruction about the fringes and the riband of blue to be worn on the borders of their garments, with which the chapter closes. It was to be a reminder of the sacredness of the commands of God, and a preservative against the doing of their own wills. As the centuries passed even this was perverted, as Matthew 23: 5 strikingly shows. The Pharisees, who displayed a false piety by enlarging the borders of their garments, were the men who were setting aside the commands of God in favour of their own tradition.

One of the most serious features of the wilderness journey comes before us in Numbers 16. The fire of revolt that broke out in Numbers 14 was still smouldering and broke out afresh in a new way. It was not now the making of a captain and returning to Egypt, but prominent men in the congregation rising up to challenge the mediatorship of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron; thus challenging the Lord, who had appointed both. Korah, being a Kohathite, belonged to the most distinguished group of

the Levites, short of being a priest. Dathan and Abiram sprang from Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, who lost the leadership natural to the firstborn because of his sin. They therefore doubtless felt they had a grievance.

Moreover, if we refer to the order in which the tribes were to encamp round the tabernacle, as given in Numbers 2, and then turn to Numbers 3, which gives us similar details as to the Levites, we find that both the tribe of Reuben and the Kohathites were placed on the south side, and as a result of this were close together to discuss and foment their imagined grievances. In claiming that both Moses and Aaron were upstarts, who had presumed to elevate themselves above the congregation, they denied that they were what they were by Divine appointment, using a specious argument.

It was quite true that all the people were "holy;" that is, they were a people that God had set apart for Himself — a fact nevertheless that they were constantly denying in their practices. It was true that the Lord was among them, as the people were very quick to see in the judgment that followed. They did not realize that in challenging the leaders whom God had chosen, they were challenging God, who had chosen them.

For the second time, as verse 4 tells us, Moses met the situation by falling on his face — standing aside for God to act. Yet he knew what God would do, as we see in verses 5-7. Korah and his company would get their answer from God Himself on the morrow. They were to take censers with fire and incense, and present themselves at the door of the tabernacle, as though they were priests. Dathan and Abiram refused to come up and contented themselves in hurling insults and false accusations against Moses. Verse 19 shows that practically all the people supported Korah in particular. The situation was one of extreme danger.

How God acted is revealed in the middle of the chapter. In the case of Korah the judgment was direct from the hand of God in His dwelling-place. In the case of the others by the providential ordering of the forces of nature. Verse 32 tells us that the men belonging to Korah perished with Dathan and Abiram. We have to pass on to Numbers 26: 11 to find that the **children** of Korah were not involved in the overthrow. Hence when we get to the Psalms we find a number that are "for the sons of Korah."

The direct allusion to this incident in Jude is very instructive. He traces the progress of the apostasy that he foretells, under three heads. First, "the way of Cain," which as a way of **self-will** in approaching God: He ignored God's way and came in his own way Second, "the error of Balaam for reward." This was **self-seeking** under cover of religion. Third, "the gainsaying of Core" which was **self-assertion** in the things of God. Jude indicates that when the third stage is reached the opposers will perish. We can see these three stages in the sad history of Christendom. In our day the third has become all too manifest. Prominent religious leaders of our day not only refuse any authority to the writings of Moses and the prophets and the New Testament apostles, but boldly challenge the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The "perishing" that Jude predicts cannot be far off.

Further, it would appear that the Apostle Paul makes reference to this incident in 2 Timothy 2: 19. In our chapter we have, "The Lord will shew who are His, and who is holy," said by Moses in reply to Korah and his company. In regard to Dathan and Abiram, he had to say, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs." These two utterances foreshadow pretty plainly the apostolic instruction for our: selves, when we are brought face to face with error that challenges the foundations of our faith, and has the effect of overthrowing faith in those who fall under the influence of the error. We are neither sovereign nor omniscient. God is both, and in due season He will manifest who are His. We are however **responsible** to act in conformity with His word, and avoid all complicity in the error and evil.

Here is an illustration of how the Old Testament Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The fact is, of course, that human nature is the same in all ages. The out-breakings of the flesh, in men three or four thousand years ago under the law, are in their principle the things that the flesh in man will do today, though we are not under the law but under grace.

Being under law, the judgment fell with drastic rapidity in the case we are considering. For Christendom today, being under grace, it is otherwise, and God waits with much longsuffering. Nevertheless of such men, and the state of things they produce, the Apostle Peter has grave things to say, when he writes, "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2: 3).

Numbers 16: 36 — Numbers 19: 22.

The gravity of the sin of Korah and his company is emphasized by the instructions the Lord gave Moses, as recorded in verses 36-40. There was to be a perpetual reminder of their sin by their censers being made into a covering of the altar, composed of broad plates. For so long as the altar was thus covered no sacrifice for sin could be offered, and evidently the gainsaying of Korah, which was sin of a most wilful kind, had placed him beyond the reach of a sin offering.

The solemn warning that we have in Hebrews 10: 26, 27, may possibly be a reference to this incident. The words, "judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" would point to this. As we read earlier in our chapter Korah and his company were "gathered together against the Lord;" that is, in challenging Aaron they had committed themselves to the position of adversaries against the Lord, who had appointed him. As Jude indicates in his Epistle a similar thing on a much larger scale will take place in Christendom just before the appearing of Christ. Many will gather together "against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2: 2, 3).

The closing verses of our chapter show that the spirit displayed by Korah, Dathan and Abiram had infected the whole congregation. In the presence of these displays of the power of God in judgment, they stubbornly refused to see the hand of God and accused Moses and Aaron, as though they had done these things by some occult power. They either could not, or would not, see the act of God. Truly they were "children in whom is no faith" (Deut. 32: 20).

Their rebellion was such that the Glory of the Lord appeared, ready to destroy them. For the third time in this chapter we find Moses fallen on his face. With God-given foresight he realized what would happen, and directed Aaron to act as intercessor in a very striking way. The **censers** of Korah and his company had been decisively rejected. Now the **one censer**, divinely appointed in the hands of Aaron, avails to stay the plague between the dead and the living. Whether the 14,700 who died were special leaders in the evil we are not told. Sin is lawlessness — rebellion against God. And the wages of sin is death. The whole incident emphasizes this.

In Hebrews 3: 1, we are bidden to consider the Lord Jesus as both Apostle and High Priest. We have just seen both these offices challenged in their typical representatives — Moses and Aaron. The apostleship of Moses was continually being demonstrated, inasmuch as he was clearly the sent one of Jehovah, through whom all the Divine communications were made. The priesthood of Aaron was established at a later date, and needed to be reinforced in the minds of the people. Hence, this is what took place, as recorded in Numbers 17.

There is no eliminating the miraculous from the early history of Israel. When God inaugurates a new dispensation, He manifests His power in such supernatural ways that men have to recognize the finger of God. It was so here. A rod is dead, being a stick severed from the living tree. Twelve such dead things, each with the name of a tribe on them, were laid up in the tabernacle before the Lord. On the rod of Levi the name of Aaron was written. The next morning eleven of the sticks were unchanged in their dead state. The twelfth, that of Aaron, was living and even fruitful, since it not only blossomed but bore almonds. Now the almond tree is one of the earliest to bear fruit. In Jeremiah 1: 11, 12, there is a play on its name, which is almost the same as the word translated "hasten" in verse 12.

It may well be that we today can see more in the details of this incident than was apparent even to Moses, when it happened. Certain it is that it has typical meaning, and hence the fact, that the rod in which life out of death was displayed was to be laid up for a testimony, is mentioned in Hebrews 9: 4, as well as here. What was conclusive in those days was that the earthly priesthood was vested in Aaron and his sons, and in no one else, so that all question and murmuring among the people on that point might effectively be stilled.

What we can see is a foreshadowing of the fact that the Priesthood of our Lord Jesus springs out of His death and resurrection, and hence it is His "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7: 16). In the type there were not only buds and blossoms but fruit also, as we have noted, and in the Priesthood of Christ we find the guarantee of abiding fruitfulness.

We say this, thinking of such a scripture as 1 Peter 2: 4-9. True, the figure there is different, "Stone," and not "Fruit." But we lay the stress upon "living," both as regards Him and ourselves. Coming to Him as the living One, we become living ones, and as such are constituted priests, both "holy" and "royal." The Christian priesthood is not a dead, nor merely ritualistic thing. It is in the power of a life which is derived from Him — "the Son, who is consecrated for evermore" (Heb. 7: 28). It all hangs upon Him, and the eternal character of His priesthood guarantees the stability of all that He supports to all eternity.

Two things were now quite plain; that, on the one hand, this earthly priesthood had been vested by God in Aaron and his house; on the other hand, that the mass of the people had definitely committed themselves as "rebels." In verse 10, God speaks of them as such. In the two verses that close the chapter we see them still displaying the rebel spirit. The Lord had just ordered the rod to be preserved as a token so that their murmurings and liability to instant death might be taken away. They at once unbelievably counter this by crying out that the presence of the Lord in His tabernacle brought death upon them.

This reminds us of the argument of the Apostle in Romans 7: 7-14. The tendency of sinners under the law was to try to throw the blame of their plight on the law. But the law was holy, just and good. The mischief has been wrought by sin, and the blame lies there and on the sinner. So it was here. The people found the presence of Jehovah in His tabernacle a menace, and wished to blame it and Him. The blame lay in themselves and in their rebellious hearts.

The whole of Numbers 18 is occupied with regulations as to the offices of both priest and Levite. It is not difficult to see how appropriately these things come in at this point. The priesthood had just been most conclusively confirmed to Aaron and his house, and the rest of the tribe of Levi confirmed in their proper place. Their responsibilities and their privileges are now clearly defined.

And first of all their responsibilities as we might expect, seeing they were under the law. The first 24 verses of the chapter were spoken directly to Aaron without the intervention of Moses, and he was told that he and his sons had to "bear the iniquity of the sanctuary," and also of the priesthood. It is

obvious, of course, that there was no iniquity attaching to the sanctuary itself, yet it was in the midst of a people marked by much iniquity, and the onus and weight, not only of their own errors but also of the errors and defilements of the people, when they touched matters of the sanctuary, would rest on the shoulders of the priests.

In verses 2-6, the responsibilities of the Levites are stated. They were to keep their charge, ministering to the priests, as given to them by the Lord, but they were not to touch the priest's office. To the priests belonged activities which were typical of worship whilst to the Levites service was apportioned. The believer today is privileged to engage in both worship and service, and, being not under law but under grace, we are established in our privileges first, and then called upon to face our responsibilities.

In verses 8-20, we find what the Lord ordained for the maintenance of the priests and their families. We may sum it up by saying they were to live of certain parts of the sacrifices brought by the people — parts that were not consumed upon the altar. These things devoted to God were to have their sacred character preserved. Of certain sacrifices what remained was to be eaten only by the priests and in the holy place. What remained of others was to be shared by the whole of the families, sons and daughters alike, with the one stipulation that they were clean.

In all this we again see a type. Today the Christian in his priestly character may offer spiritual sacrifices to God, but in so doing he receives spiritual food for himself. Some of it we may enjoy outside the sanctuary in our domestic life, and some may be ours rather in the sanctuary of God's presence, but it is a point to remember that God has linked together what we offer to Him in the way of worship and what we receive from Him in the way of our spiritual upkeep.

We must not miss the point that is made in verse 20. Though it was a day in which God was leading a people into an earthly inheritance, there was no such inheritance for Aaron and his house. In verses 23 and 24, we find the Levites also had no inheritance among the tribes. They were devoted to the service of God, and though dwelling-places were assigned to them, they did not have a special part of the land allotted to them, for the call of God separated them from the common people. Today our calling is not to an earthly inheritance but to a heavenly, so we are not surprised to see in 1 Peter 2, that having been told of our priesthood, both "holy" and "royal," we are addressed as "strangers and pilgrims." Being brought so closely into touch with God, our old links with the world-system are severed.

Verse 22 of our chapter makes the separate place of Aaron and the Levites the more pronounced. The mass of the people were not to come near the tabernacle. The word "henceforth," shows that previously they had come nearer than was now to be permitted, since their "rebel" character had been so sadly manifested.

The verses that close the chapter give us details as to the system of tithing that was instituted. The twelve tribes were to give one tenth of their produce to God, and He handed it to the children of Levi as a reward for the service they gave Him, and thus they were to be amply provided for. Had the twelve tribes been about equal in numbers and possessions, then taking for the produce of each tribe 100 as a basis for calculation, each would have been reduced to 90, whereas the Levites would have received 120. But against this the Levites were to offer in sacrifice to the Lord a tithe of the very best they received, and this would reduce that which was for their personal use to 108. This short calculation may help to show us that God does not mean to underpay His servants.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9: 14), and we may see how the Lord did so by saying, "The

workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10: 10), This law concerning the tithes often seemed burdensome to Israelites. In a time of revival things went happily enough as recorded in Nehemiah 12: 41-47. But in the very next chapter we see decline and neglect, and this increased until we get such a rebuke as is recorded in Malachi 3: 8-10.

As Christians we are not under the law but under grace, still we feel the rightness of what is often stated — that our response to grace bestowed should not fall below the level of response to the demands of law, but rather exceed it. Did all Christians give, as the Lord has prospered them, to the Lord and His service — leaving the support of the world's schemes, even the "good" and "charitable" ones, to the world that initiates them, and that can easily support them — there would be no lack for the genuine service of God.

As we leave Numbers 18, we cannot but recognize how perfect a system was established in Israel for the support of God's throne in the tabernacle and of the priests and Levites who served there. All that was wanted was that order of "life" in the children of Israel, that would have disposed them to walk in obedience. Says the Apostle, "If there had been a law given which could have given **life** . . ." (Gal. 3: 21), then all might have been well. As things were, the law failed to accomplish what was desired, "in that it was weak through the **flesh**" (Rom. 8: 3). The material on which it operated was flesh, which is dead toward God. The Christian is indwelt by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and this makes all the difference, while it increases our responsibility.

In Numbers 19, we have the provision that was made, so that any who contracted defilement should not be excluded permanently from the congregation of the Lord. It is an important type inasmuch as it sets forth the washing of water by the word, of which the New Testament speaks, but which is too often overlooked by us. In Hebrews 9: 13, we read of, "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean" which "sanctifieth to the purifying of the **flesh**;" that is, the bodies of men. In contrast to this the passage goes on to speak of the purging of the **conscience**, which is what we have today.

If the chapter be read with care it will be noticed that this slaying of the heifer is not spoken of as something to be repeated. What was to be repeated was the application of the water brought into contact with the ashes. As far as the type goes the heifer was sacrificed once for all — a fitting type of the sacrifice of Christ. The blood was sprinkled seven times before the tabernacle, while the body of the animal was burnt to ashes.

Now fire is typical of the searching judgment of God, and into the fire, when the heifer was burned, went cedar and hyssop and scarlet. Solomon spoke of trees from the cedar to hyssop, so evidently we have here the most lordly in the vegetable world and the most humble. Scarlet also seems typical of human glory. In type then we see all human glory from the greatest to the least consumed in the sacrifice of Christ. The reality indicated was expressed by Paul when he wrote of the Cross of Christ, "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6: 14). The glory of the world was consumed in his eyes.

No type however gives the fulness of the reality typified. Here the fire totally consumed the sacrifice. We rejoice in the knowledge that, as far as we are concerned, Christ as the Victim has consumed the fire! This work has been accomplished once for all. The once shed blood was presented in sevenfold completeness before the tabernacle, which reminds us that the blood of Christ abides before God in its eternal value.

In the type the holiness of the whole proceeding was emphasized. Only those who were ceremonially "clean" had anything to do with its administration on behalf of the unclean. It is striking that all through the particular form of uncleanness mentioned is that of contacting death in various

forms — a dead body, a bone, a grave. Yet the water into which some of the ashes had been put is spoken of as "a water of separation" and "a purification for sin." We carry still the flesh in us, upon which the sentence of death rests, to say nothing of living in a world of men who are dead in trespasses and sins.

How often then do we need this purification for sin; not now the cleansing from all sin, which is ours by the blood of Christ, giving us a never-to-be-forfeited and never-to-be-repeated standing in righteousness before the throne of God, but that cleansing of thought and heart and ways, that fits us to live in happy communion with God. We need it again and again; daily, we may say. This, we believe, is the cleansing that is typified here.

Twice in our chapter — verses 13 and 20 — is it stated that if defilement was incurred and the defiled person refused or neglected this "water of separation," he would be cut off from the congregation, which would mean he was outside the camp and debarred the ordinary privileges of the Israelites. So let us take to heart that except we experience this repeated cleansing we forfeit communion with God, and may ultimately lose practical communion with the people of God.

And how does this repeated cleansing reach us? Ephesians 5: 26 speaks of "the washing of water by the word." Again in John 13 we have the washing of water in the symbolic action of the Lord in the Upper Chamber, the meaning of which becomes plain if we read John 15: 3. In Numbers 19 it is water that had been brought into contact with the ashes of the heifer. For us it is the word which is saturated, if we may so say, with the death of our Saviour and all that it signifies. As the significance of His death touches our hearts they are cleansed from all that is contrary to it. Happy are we if we know the cleansing power of the word of God.

Numbers 20: 1 — Numbers 22: 41.

We resume the story of the wanderings of the people as we open chapter 20. It would appear that what is given us in Numbers 15-19 inclusive is not concerned with questions of time. This is clear if we refer to the detailed list of the camping places, given to us in Numbers 33. The last verse of Numbers 12 recorded their departure from Hazeroth, a place mentioned in Numbers 33: 17. The first verse of our chapter places them at Kadesh in the desert of Zin, and in Numbers 33 we have to pass on to verse 36 to find them there. Evidently therefore they were now not far from the end of their forty years in the wilderness.

Remarkably enough it was at Hazeroth that Miriam spoke against Moses and was smitten with leprosy. Now at Kadesh she died and was buried. We know but little about her. No other sister of Aaron and Moses is mentioned, so we are probably right in identifying her with the elder sister who acted so wisely, as recorded in Exodus 2. She is called a "prophetess" in Exodus 15: 20, and she led the women of Israel in their triumphant song. But the point where natural feeling prevailed and she failed is no more hid from us than are the failings of her brothers.

At Kadesh Miriam disappeared and so did the singing, for there was no water. Unbelief once more prevailed and there was chiding instead. They blamed Moses for having brought them to an "evil place." Of course they had not got the pleasing fruits of the promised land for they had refused to go up into it and were suffering God's disciplinary action in the wilderness. Again, and for the fourth time, the leaders fell on their faces, thus putting themselves out of sight as far as possible, and the glory of the Lord appeared; not now for judgment, as was the case in Numbers 16, but for mercy.

The instruction to Moses was that in conjunction with Aaron he should take "the rod." This was

evidently the rod of Aaron that had budded, for Moses took it "from before the Lord," where it had been laid up according to Numbers 17. With this rod in his hand, typical of priestly grace, Moses was to speak to the rock in the presence of the people, and it would give forth the water to meet their need. We have to go back to Exodus 17, where we have the account of the original smiting of the rock to bring forth the water. Once having been smitten, speaking to the rock sufficed.

If we turn to 1 Corinthians 10: 4, we find the Apostle mentioning "that spiritual Rock that followed them;" that is, the rock of Israel's history is conceived of as one, though many years passed between the two episodes, and Christ was typified thereby. No need for Christ to be smitten twice. Once sufficed, and rivers of life-giving water flowed to us. Moses with the rod of priestly grace in his hand represented God, and so on God's behalf he had but to speak, and again waters would be given. When our "Great High Priest . . . passed into the heavens" (Heb. 4: 14), He was, so to speak, laid up before the Lord, and when the word was given, what copious waters flowed from Him in the gift of the Spirit, as recorded in Acts 2. Had Moses contented himself with speaking to the rock, as instructed, the type would have been correctly given.

But what happened? Irritated beyond his endurance by the perversity of the people, instead of speaking to the rock Moses lifted up his hand and "smote the rock twice." He did this with "his rod," which we understand to mean that rod of authority with which he opened the waters of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, and rightly smote the rock in Exodus 17. This most highly honoured servant of God failed rightly to represent the grace that was typified by the rod that budded.

And it was not only a matter of what he did but also of what he said. True enough, the people were sadly rebellious in heart. He was not inaccurate in addressing them as "ye rebels," but in saying, "must we fetch you water out of this rock," he presented himself and Aaron as the doers of the miracle, instead of leading the thoughts of the people up to God Himself. Hence, though God did not fail but gave an abundant response, His disciplinary action fell on both Moses and Aaron. Neither of them would be permitted to lead the people into the land.

What a blow this must have been to both, and particularly to Moses, who had given up so much, and gone through so much, with this end in view. Are we tempted to think it very drastic discipline? Let us remember two things. First, Moses had been specially commissioned to speak on God's behalf. What God had to say to the people came through his lips, since he came from God to them. Aaron as priest was commissioned to go from the people to God, and was not God's spokesman, so angry words from his lips would not have been so grave a matter. The failure of Moses was precisely at that point which was most important of all, as giving the word from God.

And second, we are now in a position to observe that the discipline had in it an element of mercy. If Moses had been spared to lead the host into the land, what further heart-breaks would have been his! When, after some fifteen centuries, he stood on the mount of transfiguration with Christ and spoke with Him of His decease, he was for that moment in the land under far happier circumstances.

We may also note the typical import of this episode. Moses was the Apostle and Mediator of the law-system, and as such did not lead the people in. The good land of God's purpose, whether for Israel or for us, cannot be entered and enjoyed on the basis of law and law-keeping.

Verse 13 speaks of the place where all this happened as "the water of Meribah," which was the name given to the spot where the rock was rightly smitten, as recorded in Exodus 17: 7. Thus from the outset the two events were linked together.

In verses 14-21, we find a move forward towards the land is contemplated, and the district

inhabited by the descendants of Esau, on the east side of the Dead Sea, lay right across their path. We have had no mention of Esau since Genesis 36. That chapter informed us that "Esau is Edom," and also that "kings reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." The children of Esau had "dukes" in plenty, giving us an early example of what we find so often in Scripture and in our own experience, that the man who loves the world and ignores God, goes ahead in the world beyond the man who fears God.

Moses' request for right of way through the land of Edom was expressed in very discreet and conciliatory language, yet it was refused at the point of the sword. Though fully four centuries had passed we see the character of Esau reproduced in his descendants. And if we glance for a moment at the short prophecy of Obadiah, written nearly a thousand years later, we find that people marked by the same proud antagonism to their "brother Jacob," and God's unsparing judgment against them. Moses however accepted the rebuff, for the moment of Edom's judgment had not yet come.

The time had now arrived for Aaron to disappear. As was the case with Moses a little later his death was notified in advance. He had no period of debility nor bed of sickness, for he could go to the top of a mountain in the sight of the people. There, stripped of his garments, which were placed upon his son, he died. The Aaronic priesthood, being for earth, was transmissible, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death" (Heb. 7: 23). This was the first time that the priesthood had to be transmitted, hence it was done in a very public way by God's appointment, so that no one could challenge Eleazar's new position. The type however is insignificant when compared with the Antitype. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus is heavenly, and it is, as the next verse in Hebrews tells us, an "unchangeable," or "intransmissible" one. Being the Son, He is "consecrated for evermore."

Numbers 21. At this point the long conflict that was involved in the conquest of the land of Canaan, began. Moses had avoided fighting with Edom, since the judgment of that people was deferred to a later day. King Arad in the south of Canaan took the initiative, and attacked Israel with some small success at first, but ultimately brought entire destruction upon himself and his people. So here for the first time we meet with the complete destruction of cities and peoples, that marked Israel's entrance into the promised land, which is not infrequently denounced by unbelievers as being an atrocity that should never have taken place.

In so saying, however, men are really challenging God, for He authorized Israel's action, and empowered them to carry it out. God has the **right** to judge men and take their lives, when they carry their sin to insufferable heights. He did it by the flood of waters, when the antediluvians had filled the earth with violence and corruption. When the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah had become very grievous, He did it by an eruption of some kind. In the days of Abraham the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, but now it **was** full, and God elected to destroy them, not by flood or fire, but by the armies of Israel, who were to act as His "battle axe and weapons of war" (Jer. 51: 20). He will act thus again on two occasions: first, as the millennial age is ushered in, as is predicted in 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9; and again at the close of the millennial age, as predicted in Revelation 20: 9. Who shall say Him, nay?

We now reach an incident in the wilderness journey that stands out in striking fashion, inasmuch as it furnishes the third great type of the death of Christ. The people grew weary of the way and tired of the manna. They had just seen God's power in the destruction of King Arad, yet it was forgotten. The trials of the wilderness filled their thoughts and they had lost their taste for the food from heaven, which was typical of Christ. Their flesh was still crying out for the delicacies of Egypt, typical of the world. They reached a point when the manna was positively distasteful to them.

So in the governmental ways of God they reached a spot infested by serpents whose bite injected

a poison that acted like fire in their veins and ended in death. Can we not see at once a type of that "sin in the flesh," of which Romans 8: 3 speaks? In the Garden of Eden Satan not only lured man into an act of disobedience but he also injected into his moral constitution the poison of sin, which accounts for the fact that "the carnal mind," that is, the mind of the flesh, "is enmity against God." This having taken place spiritual death has supervened, and mankind lies by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Our state, poisoned by sin, lies at the root of the many offences from which we need to be justified. What has God done to meet that poisoned state?

The answer to that question lies before us in type. How Moses made a serpent of brass, erected it on a pole, so that any afflicted person might look and live, is very well known. We are concerned with its typical import. Our Lord's own words, recorded in John 3: 14 make it abundantly clear that in it His own death is indicated. The particular aspect of His death typified is that found in Romans 8: 3. The brazen serpent was made in the likeness of that which was the source of the trouble; so, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh but also as a sacrifice for sin, being Himself sinless.

The death of Christ, from this aspect, was the condemnation of sin in the flesh. Sin is the potent energy of lawlessness, and flesh — man's flesh — is the vehicle in which it works. The lawless nature of Israel's flesh had been demonstrated in the wilderness journey, and then came the episode of the brazen serpent. The hopeless lawlessness of the flesh in the whole of mankind had been proved, and came to its climax, in the cross of Christ; and just there God's condemnation of sin — the root principle — fell once and for all.

But the wonder is that death has in the cross of Christ, become the way of life. The uplifted brazen serpent became the way of life to many; but only to those who obeyed the glad proclamation and turned their eyes upon it. The whole arrangement was of such a nature as to appear foolish to a reasoning mind and only appeal to faith. We cannot help thinking that the men of intellect in Israel would have been tempted to reason that the scheme was absurd; that there could be no connection between a glance at a piece of brass and release from the effects of poison; and therefore to ignore the proclamation. The child in its mother's arms, if told to look, would not have reasoned but would have looked and been cured.

In keeping with this are the Lord's words, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11: 25). **Faith**, not reason, is the way of blessing.

From this point the people "set forward," as verse 10 tells us; and there can be no doubt that it is when a Christian apprehends the death of Christ, in that aspect of it typified by the brazen serpent, that a forward movement of a spiritual sort begins. But before they really started for the promised land, there came the episode of the well to which they were conducted by the mercy of God, without their asking for it. Now here we have a type of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as we see by the Lord's words recorded in John 4: 14 and John 7: 37-39.

It is very striking how the two types — the brazen serpent and the springing well — are brought together in this one chapter, just as the realities typified are found together in the opening verses of Romans 8. Only there the order is reversed. Verse 2 speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and verse 3 of the condemnation of "sin in the flesh;" that is, of the old life "in Adam." There is no more important lesson for a believer to learn than that his old life as a child of Adam has been condemned in the cross of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit indwelling him is the power of that new life which is his in Christ, and upon which no condemnation can ever rest.

If we are to know **the power of** the Spirit in a practical way there must be the removal of what would quench or grieve Him. Like the princes in verse 18, who laboured to remove the earth that would

have hindered the free flowing of the water, we too must act. How often with us the things of earth are obstructive! Israel sang when the waters freely flowed, and when nothing obstructs the "springing up into everlasting life" of the well of water that Christ gives, and the outward flow from the believer of the "rivers of living water," there is indeed a song in the heart. The upspringing and the song go together.

During the wilderness journey the people sang three times. First, the song of salvation on the further banks of the Red Sea. Third, that of our chapter, which typifies the song of deliverance from the enslaving power of sin in the flesh. But between these two came the sad episode of the golden calf, when the people sang around it in nakedness, and in this we see the depths to which the professed people of God may sink.

As at the beginning of our chapter, so at the end, we hear the din of conflict. Sihon had smitten Moab but now he falls before Israel, and so too Og the king of Bashan, in spite of the fact that he was a giant, as we learn in Deuteronomy 3: 11. The events that typify victory over **the flesh within** are followed by the record of victory over **the foes without**. And this is indeed the way in which things work in our spiritual experience.

But these victories were followed by what we may call a counterattack of the enemy. Though Moab had been smitten by Sihon it still existed as a kingdom and Balak its king was sore afraid. So he sought for Balaam, who had a great reputation as a man who wielded "enchantments" This we see if we turn to Numbers 24: 1. If we glance at verses 8 and 18 of Numbers 22, we discover that this man managed to cover his enchantments, which were of course of the devil, with the appearance of reverencing Jehovah as his God. Balak hoped to bring a curse on the people of God by enlisting the help of this professed prophet of God, who was really a servant of Satan. An attack of that kind is marked by exceeding subtilty.

Numbers 22 is occupied with the preliminaries to the attack. As we are told in 2 Peter 2: 15, Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and longed to possess himself of the honours and wealth that was offered to him. On the other hand God intervened and forbade the mission declaring the people to be definitely blessed. Balak persisting a second time, Balaam again referred the matter to God, and this time was given permission to go with the understanding he could only utter what God gave to him. Going, God's anger was kindled against him.

We may be tempted to wonder at this, but we must remember that God does not change **His purpose**. If, knowing this, we persist like Balaam, God may change **His dealings** with us, as He did with Balaam, and permit us to go so that in His discipline we may reap the bitter result of our own way. Even so, as with Balaam, He will give us ample warning of what lies before us.

The incident related as to Balaam's ass has excited much unbelieving protest and even ridicule, yet it is vouched for by Peter in that passage to which we have referred. If Satan could speak through a serpent words of deceit, God can, if He chooses, speak words of warning through an ass. The eyes of Balaam's heart were blinded by his avarice and his traffic with demons, and now we see that the eyes of his head were as blind as the eyes of his heart. The eyes of his head were opened so that at last he saw the angel as clearly as his donkey had done. But the veil over the eyes of his heart remained.

The angel that confronted him held a drawn sword in his hand. The significance of this, especially as it blocked his way, would, we should think, hardly be missed. Yet evidently Balaam was blinded as to its significance, and he went forward to his doom, as it ultimately proved. He never returned to his native land. The wealth and honour, if he ever got them, he never lived to enjoy. He fell by the sword, not of the angel, who at the beginning barred his way to Moab, but of the very people that he attempted

to curse in defiance of the purpose of God, as recorded in Numbers 31: 8.

Let us accept the warning that his history is intended to give us. It illustrates a part of the course followed by apostates in the Christian profession, for they go in the way of Cain; and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perish in the gainsaying of Korah, as we are told in the Epistle of Jude.

Numbers 23: 1 — Numbers 26: 65.

The last verse of chapter 22 shed light upon the evil power that animated Moab and Balak their king. They had in their midst the "high places of Baal." So when in the first verse of our chapter we read that Balaam said, "Build me **here** seven altars," we at once see that this man, who professed himself to be a prophet of the Lord, was really in league with the powers of darkness. When in conflict with Baal, Elijah repaired the **one** altar of the Lord that was broken down, and he prevailed. In contrast with that, we are now to see that the **seven** altars of Baal can prevail nothing against the blessing of God.

Balaam however, as verse 3 shows, treated the offerings burned upon the seven altars as being Balak's, while he himself went off to a solitary place, if perchance the Lord would meet and instruct him there. He evidently had no sense of the supreme power and glory of Jehovah, while he knew that no power could prevail against His word. To him Jehovah was only the First among many, and not the supreme and only God.

God however did meet him, and put into his mouth words, that he was compelled to utter in the presence of Balak, which are recorded for us in verses 7 - 10. Though Balak had called him to curse, and for that had offered him great reward, he found himself unable to do it. God had neither cursed nor defied them, so his mouth for that purpose was closed. The rather he beheld them from the heights, and so considered them as God saw them, from the standpoint of His purpose. That being so he had to announce three things.

First, the **separation** of the people. God had called Abraham out from his kindred and country, and they, who were descended from him through Isaac the child of promise, were to share in this calling and maintain it, though over four centuries has passed. To this day the Jew is separated from the Gentiles, or nations, for what God ordains is not affected by time nor by the schemes of men.

Second, the **multiplication** of this chosen and separated people. Their number should be beyond computation. Knowing this, the adversary all through the ages has aimed at reducing their number, and in the process has used many evil human instruments, of whom in our days Hitler has been the last, and one of the worst. But, in spite of all that the adversary can do, this prediction will be verified in the coming age.

Third, their **beatification**, using this word in its proper meaning, and not the meaning it has been given by the Romish religion. Abraham died "the death of the righteous," and so too have those who were truly "the children of Abraham," (Gal. 3: 7), and not merely his children by natural descent. But in this prophecy Israel is viewed in the light of God's purpose and so viewed, his "last end" will be in the glory of the millennial age. Balaam might well desire such an end, but he never took the road that leads to it. Similarly, many today may desire the end of the Christian, while turning away from the life that we have found in Christ.

Hearing all this, Balak naturally remonstrated, and Balaam reaffirmed that he was under control to the Lord. Balak no doubt believed in many gods, each with his special localities or high places; and

so, regarding the Lord as only another of these, he thought a change of place might produce the cursing he desired, but again the Lord met Balaam and put in his mouth the words he had to utter.

His preamble this time is very striking, and of a more positive nature, in it he contrasts God with man. Of man it can be said, "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking **lies**" (Ps. 58: 3). Moreover the wisest of men frequently commit themselves to actions that prove to be wrong, and they have to **repent** and retract. Now it is impossible for God to lie, as we are told in Titus 1: 2, and His word stands, so that, when He speaks, He makes it good. God's blessing rested on Israel and no power of the adversary, that Balaam could wield, could prevail to reverse it. The blessings conferred upon the church are far higher than those given to Israel; so as we consider the spiritual and heavenly blessings that are ours in Christ, let us rejoice in the assurance that these verses give.

This time Balaam is forced to pronounce in the first place the **justification** of God's people, speaking as one who only saw God's side of the matter, for the statements of verses 21-23 must be read in the light of the words that close verse 23, "What hath God wrought!" We recognize the prophetic character of these utterances. When he spoke, God had indeed brought Israel out of Egypt with great strength, but His mighty work which would furnish the righteous basis for the justification of the people, in whom so much iniquity was found and so much perverseness manifested, was not accomplished till Christ came. Nor was "the shout of a king" made effective, according to God.

This is the first positive mention of a king in Israel, for in Genesis 36: 31, the word is mentioned in a purely negative way. David was raised up as a king, typical of Christ; but only when Christ Himself returns in glory will "the shout of a king" really be heard in their midst; unless indeed, we are permitted to apply these words to that moment when on the cross Jesus uttered the loud cry and said, "It is finished," while above His sacred head stood Pilate's title, "The King of the Jews."

The power of God had so laid hold of Balaam that he saw and spake of nothing but God, and what God had wrought. The deliverance of the people from Egypt and their passage through the wilderness was all the fruit of His strength. Moreover He would endow the people with His strength, so that ultimately they too should overcome all their foes. This is evident as we read verse 24. They should be not only **justified** and **delivered** but also **overcoming** in the power of God.

Disappointed though he was Balak gave Balaam a third opportunity to utter a curse. In his ignorance of the commanding power of God, he still thought something might be gained by a change of place with its further altars and sacrifices. As for Balaam, the opening verse of Numbers 24 reveals that though previously he had spoken of going forth that he might meet the Lord, he had really gone "to seek for enchantments." He sought **that**, but he did not get it, since the Lord restrained the powers of darkness and met **Balaam Himself**. Something similar is seen in 1 Samuel 28, when the witch of Endor essayed to call up Samuel through her "familiar spirit," who would have impersonated him; but in result God held in check the demon and allowed Samuel himself to appear. God can thus restrain the adversary as seems good to Him.

As Balaam opened his lips for the third time he spoke of himself in a remarkable way. In saying that now his eyes were opened he confessed that they had been shut, and therefore he had been in the dark. The Spirit of God had come upon him, and he was saying what the Spirit forced him to say. It does not follow therefore that his opened eye meant that he had turned to God: indeed his subsequent history proves that he had not done so. But his prefatory words are intended to assure us that he did indeed speak as a prophet, and the words he uttered were the words of God.

Previously he had been impelled to state that Israel was a people whom God had separated for Himself, and then that He had justified them in spite of their natural sinfulness. Now he has to declare

that God had **beautified** them. In Psalm 66 we have the prayer of Moses, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Here we find how abundantly God answered that desire, and how He added **victory** and **exaltation** to the beauty. Again we have to remind ourselves that the prophecy speaks of what God has in His purpose for Israel, which in due season He will bring to pass. What that nation through the ages would prove themselves to be is not the theme here. In the New Testament we find that God speaks in the same way of ourselves — the church of God. See for instance, Romans 8: 29, 30; Ephesians 2: 1-7; where the purpose of God is in view and not our practical state while in this world.

Balak was left with the statement that to curse Israel was to bring a curse on the head of the one who uttered it. This angered him and he wished to summarily dismiss Balaam, only to find that the Lord was about to give further utterance through Balaam's lips, to which he had to listen. He had summarily dismissed him in anger, and though Balaam spoke of departing, he found himself compelled to predict Israel's future, and particularly what they as a people should do to Moab in the latter days. So Balak had to hear not only Israel's present blessing but also their victorious destiny.

Ungodly though he was, for a fourth time Balaam was forced to utter inspired words, and verse 16 is instructive as to what is implied by inspiration. He not only "**saw**," and "**knew**," but also "**heard** the **words** of God." Evidently he was **verbally** inspired. Moreover he used three names; not only "God," but also "The Most High," a name that seems specially connected with His supremacy in the millennial age, and also "The Almighty," the name by which He revealed Himself to Abraham, from whom Israel sprang. Had Balaam really known God for himself in the way these names indicate, he would have been arrested in his evil course. He furnishes us with a solemn example of what good things a man may utter while he himself remains in "the bond of iniquity," like Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8.

Bearing verse 16 in mind, the "Him," at the beginning of verse 17 is "the Almighty." Yet in his First Epistle to Timothy Paul tells us that God is "invisible," One whom "no man hath seen, nor can see." Balaam was inspired however, and the Deity that he is going to see is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ, though, as he says, "not now?" and "not nigh." Yes, when Balaam stands before the great white throne he will have his only sight of the One we have learned to love. In contrast with this we are to see Him "as He is," and be "like Him."

The "Star" and the "Sceptre" plainly refer to Christ; the former in His first advent, the latter in His second. It is quite possible that this prediction concerning the "Star" was remembered in the East, and handed down from generation to generation, and so furnished the "wise men from the east" with the idea that the remarkable star they saw indicated the birth of the King of the Jews.

Here again then, the Lord Jesus is predicted in a figurative way. In Genesis 3, He was indicated as the "**Seed**," but of "the woman." This presented Him as truly Man, yet not of Adam's fallen race: the most fundamental fact of all. Then in Genesis 28, we had old Jacob's prophecy in which He was prefigured as the "**Shepherd**," to gather and control God's sheep; and the "**Stone**," upon which Israel should ultimately be built up, and, as we know when we come to the New Testament, all God's purposes should be founded. Now He is the "Star," shining with promise and hope for Israel; and the "**Sceptre**," who will finally rule in the midst of His people for the deliverance and blessing of the whole earth. We may add that, in consequence of His rejection by Israel, when the star shone over His birth in humiliation, He is going to shine as the "Bright and Morning Star" for His waiting church.

The words of Balaam, however, were mainly concerned with the way in which the "Sceptre" would smite and destroy Moab and the other peoples who were Israel's opponents. His utterances

finished, Balaam departed "to his place." This does not mean that he returned to his own land, for in Revelation 14 we learn that it was he that instigated the evils that occupy the next chapter, and we presently find that when Moab and the Midianites were destroyed he died amongst them.

Before proceeding to Numbers 25, let us recapitulate for a moment, so that we may observe how truly the law had "a shadow of good things to come." The good things made known in the Epistle to the Romans have come before us in their right order by these shadows.

In Exodus 11, we had indicated the "no difference" doctrine of Romans 3; and in Exodus 12 the blood of propitiation, which gave Israel shelter from the judgment of God, also found in Romans 3.

Then in Exodus 14 and 15, we had the shadow of what is stated in the end of Romans 4 and early verses of Romans 5. A way has been Divinely made through death on to resurrection ground, which has broken the power of the enemy and brought us to God Himself in peace, and rejoicing in the hope of glory; just as on the further shore of the Red Sea, Israel sang of God bringing them to His holy habitation in the promised land.

This was followed by the sorrowful experiences of the wilderness, when the utter perversity of man's flesh, as seen in Israel, was fully proved; only to be followed by the incident of the brazen serpent. In Romans 7 the sinfulness of the flesh, as revealed in Paul's own experience, is set forth at length followed by the condemnation of "sin in the flesh" in the sacrifice of Christ, who came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," as stated in Romans 8: 3. But in this very passage too we find the Holy Spirit given as the power of the new life in Christ, just as the shadow of this, the springing well, is found in the same chapter as the incident of the brazen serpent.

And now we have had the attempt of the adversary, which signally failed, to bring a curse on the people, and thus defeat God's purpose as to them. Here is the shadow of the triumphant passage toward the end of Romans 8, where we are assured that nothing can defeat the purpose of God concerning His saints, since everyone foreknown is glorified, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To the Jew, before Christ came, all this was history of much interest, and much condemnation as regards their forefathers. Until the substance was revealed in Christ and His Gospel, its "shadow" character did not appear. It is we who are in a favoured position, which enables us to discern the shadow character of the history. How great must be the Person and the work to cast a shadow extending over thousands of years. The tip of the shadow appeared in the Garden of Eden, where sin first entered. In the events we have been considering the shadow is broad and deep.

As we commence reading Numbers 25, we descend from Israel, viewed according to God's purpose, to Israel, as they actually were at that time in carnality and unbelief. Balaam is not mentioned in the chapter but, as we have noted, he was at the bottom of the evil, instigating Balak to promote it. In result, "Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor." The "whoredom" involved in this was doubtless committed in honour of Baal, and so its wickedness disguised in their minds. Not all the people were involved, but enough to make it an act of apostasy that deserved and got severe and immediate judgment.

At the outset of his prophecy Balaam had declared the separation of Israel from all nations. Now comes the diabolical effort of this evil man to defeat his own words by seducing them into alliance with Moab. He did not succeed of course in defeating God's purpose, but he did seduce many, and so brought condign punishment upon them. There was a display of grief on the part of those not involved in the sin, as we see in verse 6, and of zeal for the glory of God, as displayed by Phineas. Not only did

twenty-four thousand of the people die, but it brought a sentence of death on the Midianites at the hand of Israel.

Of all Satan's devices against us none is more effective than the temptation to ally oneself with the world; hence the searching words of James 4: 4, and of 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18. In such an alliance the men of the world **cannot go** the Christian way; they have not the life which would enable them to do so. Having the flesh in him, the Christian **can go** the world's way. Hence the result of the tension, that is produced, is a foregone conclusion.

Numbers 26 records the numbering of the people that the Lord ordered after the plague had subsided. The book of Numbers began with the numbering that took place in the second year after they came out of Egypt; now we have that which was taken just before they entered the land. It is marked by rather more detail than we had in Numbers 1, and it is in this chapter we learn how that the children of Korah were spared when the judgment fell on their father.

If the two numberings be compared, we find that there was only a very small decrease in the total at the end of the journey, yet there were several large variations in the case of individual tribes. For instance Simeon fell to considerably less than half, which is significant in view of verse 14 of the last chapter. Others decreased in lesser degree. Some increased; notably Manasseh, since its total went up by just over 20,000. We know nothing that accounts for these other variations save that the small decrease in the case of Reuben may be accounted for by rebellion of Dathan and Abiram.

The Levites were excluded from the first numbering, save that they were counted later so that they might be substituted for the firstborn of all the people. In the second numbering they were counted, and the total was only slightly in excess of the earlier time. It is emphasized in our chapter that though the inheritance of the tribes was to be according to their number, and by lot, they were to have no inheritance amongst the others, since they were separated to the service of God.

One striking fact emerges at the end of the chapter. Amongst all these males of twenty years and over, numbering just over 600,000, there was not an individual left alive, who had been in the earlier census, saving Caleb and Joshua. We turn back to Numbers 14, and again reading verses 20-32, we see with what absolute exactitude God fulfils the word He has spoken. A solemn fact for the unbeliever, but one in which we who believe can heartily rejoice.

Numbers 27: 1 — Numbers 36: 13.

In verse 33 of the previous chapter it was noted that Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh had no son, but daughters only. In Numbers 27 we find that this gave rise to legislation in Israel, though as yet they had not reached the land where the inheritance was to be. Evidently then these daughters were women of faith who relied on the promise of God. They took it for granted that the inheritance would materialize, and asked that their father's portion should not be lost. The answer of God was, "The daughters of Zelophehad **speak right.**" Faith is always right and it commands a **blessing.** The inheritance was to be theirs.

But the latter part of the chapter confirms the fact that Moses in the disciplinary ways of God was not permitted to lead the people into the inheritance. Accepting this discipline, he besought God to appoint the man who should lead them in, and Joshua was indicated. His qualification consisted in that he was, "a man in whom is the Spirit." Yet, as verse 21 shows he was to differ from Moses in being more dependent upon Eleazer the priest, who had the Urim and the Thummim, through which counsel and judgment should be given.

Here then we have in shadowy outline a type of Christ as "the Captain" of our "salvation," who by His Spirit is "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2: 10). Only here, as so often, the Antitype so far exceeds the type that we are struck by the contrasts rather than by the resemblance. The Lord Jesus is Himself both the Captain and the High Priest: not only the Possessor of the Spirit but One who sheds Himself forth upon others: the Leader to glory above, and not merely to an inheritance below.

By laying his hands upon Joshua, Moses identified himself with him in a public way, and thus his appointment was confirmed in the sight of the people. Yet we do not reach the historic record of the death of Moses until the end of Deuteronomy. From this point therefore we meet with but little in the way of recorded history, and are occupied mainly with further legislation and with moral instruction.

In Numbers 28 and Numbers 29, we have very full instructions as to the various sacrifices that were to be offered — day by day, both morning and evening; on the sabbaths; at the beginning of the months; and on the occasion of the great feasts that marked the Israelitish year. In verse 2 they are spoken of as "My offering," "My bread," "My sacrifices." Thus God claimed them as His right. They were not optional but compulsory.

In the main they were burnt offerings with their accompanying meat and drink offerings, all of which were "a sweet savour." They set forth typically the excellence of Christ in His sacrifice, which is such a delight to the heart of God. But with these there was also an offering for sin, which shows that the sinful state of the people was never forgotten, but was met by sacrifice.

The feasts of the Lord were specified in Leviticus 23 and the offering of sacrifices mentioned, but now we have these given to us in full detail. Nothing was left to the discretion or feelings of the people; rather God was to be acknowledged and honoured according to His pleasure. In this we see a principle of importance. We draw near to God today and worship Him in another order of things. Later in Israel's history one of their prophets said, "Receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips" (Hosea 14: 2); thus recognizing that something coming out of their hearts through their lips would be more acceptable than the mechanical presentation of an animal. Today, they that worship God "**must** worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 24). And the way in which spiritual worship is publicly to be offered is prescribed in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14, It is not left for us to prescribe for ourselves.

When we reach Numbers 29: 12, we come to the offerings for the feast of Tabernacles, which sets forth in type the Millennial rest, for which Israel still waits. If we examine the succeeding verses we notice the steady reduction in the number of bullocks offered from the first day to the seventh. If the bullocks indicate **the appreciation** of God's benefits in Christ on the part of the offerers, this fits in with what we learn of the "thousand years" in the Revelation. As the centuries pass there is deterioration, which culminates in rebellion directly Satan is once more active.

Verse 35 brings us to the eighth day of the feast, which according to Leviticus 23 was "an holy convocation," and "a solemn assembly." On this day only one bullock was to be offered, and the lambs only seven instead of fourteen: similar to what was ordered for the day of atonement in verse 8. So we are carried back in thought to that great day.

It was however, we understand "that great day of the feast" (John 7: 37), on which Jesus cried aloud as to the rivers of living water, which would flow as the result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. No dwindling, no depreciation of energy here!

We pass from what was compulsory to what was optional when we read Numbers 30. The making of vows was not imposed upon any but, if made by a man, the vow was binding; if by a woman, it might be disallowed by father or husband. It has been remarked that in Scripture a woman

often stands figuratively for a system or a community, and it may be so here. Israel as a community pledged themselves to obedience to the law of God. This vow of theirs was not disallowed and to this day they suffer the governmental consequences of their failure. On the other hand, when our Lord said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," there could be no annulment, had He desired it. He did not desire it, or say, "Father, save Me from this hour," He said rather, "Father, glorify Thy name," as we read in John 12.

In Numbers 31 we resume a little history. Moses was not to pass off the scene until the Midianites, which included Moab, were destroyed. The normal path of Israel was to pass peacefully through these peoples that dwelt in lands on the fringe of the land of promise, just as the normal path of a Christian is to be an inoffensive pilgrim on his heavenward way. But here were the people that had seduced Israel to fornication, which is a figure of that unholy intercourse and alliance with the world-system which is such a danger to the Christian. In our chapter, death fell upon every male and only the youngest females were allowed to live. Balaam died also. A portion of the spoil had to be offered to the Lord.

The weapons of the Christian are not carnal. He does not slay the foes who tempt him but learns to apply the death of Christ to himself, so that in practice he becomes dead to sin. Only then is it that there is fruit of a kind that can be offered to God. We may give of our substance for the work of the Lord and His workmen in such a way as to be, "a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Phil. 4: 18); as well as offering "the sacrifice of praise . . . the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name (Heb. 13: 15).

Typical instruction of a very searching sort is brought home to us as we read Numbers 32. Two tribes, Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh petitioned Moses to be allowed to settle down on the conquered lands to the east of Jordan and not find their portion in that which was definitely the land of God's promise. What particularly moved them to desire this was the abundance of cattle that they had acquired. The good things that God had granted took away their desire for Canaan.

We have already seen how unbelief excluded multitudes from the land, though afterwards they wanted to go in. We now see how the good things of earth may lead people to exclude themselves. If the land was to be entered the Jordan had to be crossed, and the crossing of Jordan, which is recorded in Joshua 3, is typical of death and resurrection with Christ, as the way of entrance into the realization of the heavenly portion to which we are called, as we see in Colossians and 3. Then it is that we can really seek those things that are above and not on the earth, setting our minds upon them, and finding our portion where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

The proposal made by the two and a half tribes, which was finally accepted by Moses, was that, while their wives and children together with much cattle and other possessions should settle comfortably in the land of Jazer and Gilead, the men should cross with the other tribes in order to help fight their battles and see them settled in the land of promise, yet find their own inheritance outside the place of God's promise.

The lesson that is furnished by this type is very clear, and should be inwardly digested by each of us. In the New Testament we are plainly told that those that have riches enter with much difficulty into the kingdom of God, and that not many wise and mighty and noble are called; but here we see that the rich and good things of earth make it difficult for those who possess them to lay hold upon their heavenly possessions. It is so easy for us, while we assent to the truth of our heavenly calling, to settle down in our comfortable earthly circumstances, and fail to lay hold upon it as a matter of faith's experience.

These men had had experience of battles, which by the power of God and at very little loss to themselves, had been easily won; so they were not averse to more fighting in the land. Some of us may be like them. We are told to contend earnestly for the faith, and to some of us a bit of controversial fighting makes an appeal, but — mark it well — it is possible to contend earnestly for what we may call the heavenly side of truth, and yet be living lives mainly governed by the good things of earth which we have by the mercy of God. We may accept the fact that, "Our conversation [associations of life] is in heaven" (Phil. 3: 20), and yet have the practical associations of our lives very much in earthly things.

One thing more we must observe. When Israel declined, captivity began with the two and a half tribes. Even in the days of Ahab Ramoth in Gilead was in the hands of the Syrians, and later those parts were the first to fall captive to Assyria. Just so, the earthly minded Christian is captivated most easily by the spirit of the world.

The people now being on the very edge of the land, Moses was commanded to put on record all the places where they encamped during the forty years of their wanderings, and a long list it proves to have been, occupying the first 49 verses of Numbers 33. God marked all their wanderings, and they were never to forget them, inasmuch as all bore witness to the forbearing and providing kindness of God. At the end of this chapter they are directed to dispossess completely the nations of Canaan, when they went in, and destroy every trace of their idolatries, and warned that if they did not do it, it would be their own undoing. There was to be no compromise with the power of Satan reigning there. Similarly, as Ephesians 6 shows, there can be no compromise with the world rulers of this darkness and the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Numbers 34 assumes that the people have arrived victoriously in the land and obtained possession and so the borders of the land are specified, and how it was to be divided. It is noticeable that the border eastward was to run from the east side of the sea of Chinnereth — the Lake of Galilee — down the Jordan to the east side of the salt sea. So the portion of the two and a half tribes was not included in it.

The division of the land among the other tribes is not mentioned here: what is mentioned is the provision of cities for the Levites and then the provision of cities of refuge for the manslayer. Both these things occupy Numbers 35.

The males of the tribe of Levi were specially called to the service of God and therefore they had no definite section of the promised land allotted to them. They were to be given forty eight cities and these were to be scattered throughout the portions given to the other tribes. Moreover they were to possess land round each of these cities extending to a depth of 2,000 cubits — which means at least 1,000 yards, and probably a little more. This land was to be for their cattle and for their goods; that is, we suppose, for their subsistence by reason of cultivation. The land attached to each city may seem to us restricted and insufficient, but we must remember that these cities were very small, judged by our standards, as has been demonstrated by the recent excavation of ancient Jericho.

In these provisions we see the gracious care of God for those whom He calls to devote their lives to His service. We have already seen how they were to be supported by the system of tithing that was instituted and now we find that their very dwelling places were divinely arranged. God places His servants as it seems good to Him. He does not leave them to pick and choose for themselves.

All this, we are assured, contains salutary lessons for ourselves. There is of course this important difference; the Levites were called in the mass to service without any stipulation as to their spiritual state. Their position stood upon a tribal basis. God has His servants today, but their calling rests upon

another basis altogether — neither national nor tribal, but spiritual. Only those who have been redeemed and born again have the ability to serve Him, and even so, the effectiveness of their service depends upon their spiritual state.

Of the forty eight Levitical cities six were to be selected as cities of refuge, as the latter part of the chapter indicates. The law concerning them is also given in full. The prime thought underlying the whole matter is that life belongs to the God who gave it. No man has any right to take it away. Hence in verse 30 the death penalty is plainly pronounced upon anyone convicted of murder on the testimony of two or more witnesses, thus reaffirming the primitive enactment of Genesis 9: 6. The death sentence upon the murderer is to be executed by properly constituted authority. The wilful shedding of man's blood pollutes and defiles the land, and it is only cleansed as the blood of the murderer is shed. So it is stated at the end of our chapter. In the light of this, we are clearly living in an earth that is terribly defiled, and that supremely by the death of the Son of God.

But many cases would occur accidental in nature, where man's will had not been at work, and for such manslaughterers the cities of refuge were to be provided. There sanctuary was to be found from the avenger of blood available until the death of the high priest of those days, after which sanctuary would not be needed. We have to pass on to Joshua 20 to find the names of the six cities, and if we read that chapter we shall note how wisely they were selected. They were distributed on both sides of Jordan in such a manner that the manslayer would never be very far from one of the cities, no matter where the accident took place. Here again we note the tender mercy of our God.

These things have a typical import as is made quite plain by the closing verses of Hebrews 6. Palestine has been defiled by the shedding of blood, and supremely by the blood of God's dear Son. Was His death to be accounted as murder or manslaughter? The dying prayer of our Lord, recorded in Luke 23: 34, was in effect a request that it be treated by God as manslaughter only; and Peter's declaration, recorded in Acts 3: 17, was in effect an announcement that God had accepted the prayer. Hence in the exaltation of Christ in heaven, before He comes in glory to crush His foes on earth, a city of refuge has been opened. When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, Jews who had believed could be described as those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The hope set before the manslayer, incarcerated in a city of refuge, was the death of the high priest. Our High Priest can never die, but there will be a change in the exercise of His priesthood, when He comes again in glory, and this is the hope set before the believer today.

One thing more let us note: the refuge was provided, but the manslayer had to make the effort to avail himself of it. If he did not, his blood would be upon his own head. This exactly figures the situation as the Gospel is preached today. Take for example, Paul's address in the synagogue at Antioch, reported in Acts 13. In verses 38 and 39 he showed that refuge was provided, but in verses 40 and 41 he warned those who were inclined to ignore or despise it.

The last chapter (Numbers 36) reverts to the daughters of Zelophehad, and provision was made as to their marriage affairs so that the inheritance vested in them should not be alienated from the tribe to which they belonged. This might seem to us a trivial matter, but God took notice of it and provided for it. It was included among the "commandments and judgments" that the Lord laid down through Moses. Nothing that concerned His people was overlooked by Him.

Reaching the end of the Book of Numbers, we ask our readers to note that the first word of Exodus is, "Now." The first word of Leviticus is, "And." The first word of Numbers is, "And." That is, there is no real break between the first four books. Deuteronomy however does not so begin. It evidently inaugurates a new series, which does not end till we finish the Second Book of Kings, since

again the books begin with a similar copulative expression. Deuteronomy is concerned with the farewell words of Moses, in which a recapitulation of their history has a large place.

If permitted to continue these studies, we may therefore pass from Numbers to consider the book of Job, which carries us back to, or even beyond the time of Moses, rather than continue with the recapitulation afforded in Deuteronomy.