

# *The Book of Deuteronomy*

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**(2003–2005 Study)**

The following notes on the Book of Deuteronomy were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 2003-2005. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

# THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 2003-2005)

The Book of Deuteronomy is the fifth (and last) book in the Pentateuch. The name is somewhat an abbreviation of the Latin *Deuteronomium*, meaning “second law.” It has been suggested that this word indicates a reiteration of the Law to Israel, with which the previous generation was acquainted. However, since that generation died in the wilderness, not all of the current generation were cognizant of the experiences of the earlier generation. Therefore, Moses reviewed the experiences of Israel, who had departed from Egypt to meet God at Mount Sinai, where they were instructed as to the course they would subsequently follow as His people. All of these thoughts seem to be embodied in the expression “Deuteronomy.”

In addition, the latter part of the name, “onomy” (*onomos*), is like astronomy, which means the law of the stars, and “Deuter” means two, second, or repetition. God’s method in instructing His people is always to have two or three confirmatory witnesses to attest whatever important lesson He wishes to convey to His people (both natural and spiritual Israel). Hence those who profess to honor and serve Him will be without excuse as to the availability of instruction. They will not be able to say in the future, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

The beginning five verses of Deuteronomy are preparatory in that they introduce the book to the reader. Certainly Moses had nothing to do with writing the first five verses. Expositors of this book acknowledge that these verses are an introduction written by another hand, but they differ as to whether it was the hand of Ezra or Joshua, who led the Israelites into the land of Canaan following the death of Moses. We are inclined to feel that Ezra penned these verses, for the work, or ministry, of Joshua in conquering the land was only six years in duration. Joshua’s life after Moses was relatively short, and during that time, he was engaged in warfare with the Canaanites—a work that was not conducive to writing. Of course Moses wrote the remainder of the Book of Deuteronomy, as Holy Writ attests.

**Deut. 1:1** These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

The Book of Deuteronomy comprises “the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this [the east] side [of the] Jordan [River] in the wilderness” in the plain of Moab (or opposite Jericho). Eventually, it will be seen that Deuteronomy consists of two lectures, both on the same theme.

Moses’ words were spoken “in the plain over against the Red sea.” This “plain” seems to be the Arabah, the wadi or very great valley that leads from the southern part of Israel down to the Gulf of Aqaba. The account is not saying that Moses was down near the Gulf of Aqaba at the time he gave his discourses; rather, it is saying that he was much farther north at the southern entry into Palestine but on the right (or east) side of the Dead Sea, where, according to God’s command, the Israelites were to enter the land. In other words, when the Israelites left Mount Horeb, which is one of the peaks of the Mount Sinai complex, they journeyed north in that direction to make entry into the Promised Land. The other route was to travel way around to the right and go up on the east side of the Dead Sea, circling and then entering through Jericho—which they eventually had to do.

Notice that the word “sea,” in italics in the King James, is a supplied word and should be omitted. Therefore, the plain was “over against the red,” but what the “red” landmark was in Moab we do not know. Possibly the reflection of the sun on the mountain in that particular desert area gave a reddish hue. In any event, the location was not over against the Red Sea, for

that body of water did not extend 100 miles north of Aqaba.

**Q:** Under the entry “Red Sea,” Young’s *Analytical Concordance* states that the head of the Gulf of Aqaba has “retired 50 miles since the birth of Christ.” Therefore, back in Joshua’s day, a thousand years earlier, couldn’t the Gulf of Aqaba have extended many miles even farther north, perhaps a hundred miles in all? If so, would that possibility have some bearing on the word “red”?

**A:** Yes, it could. That comment is worthy of consideration because the account seems to refer inferentially to the Red Sea. The translators supplied the word “sea” because they had that thought. The same thing has happened in Ephesus, Turkey. Over the years the water has receded about two miles from the Temple of Diana, but of course the Gulf of Aqaba is a much greater distance.

The next word that becomes a problem is Paran. Moses spoke to “all Israel ... between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.” There were several Parans, but this Paran was near Jericho, the plain of Moab, and the Jordan River, where the Israelites were about to cross. The cities of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab were listed so that in the future, when the Bible is made plain to all mankind, its outstanding accuracy in minute detail will be seen—to the embarrassment of historians and others who have questioned the veracity of the Scriptures. Incidentally, Hazeroth is mentioned as a stopping place in Numbers 33:17.

The Book of Deuteronomy was a climactic experience for Moses—his swan song, as it were. He tried to put his whole heart and soul into this book so that he could feel he had accomplished his ministry as a faithful steward of the Lord’s Word. Moses gave this discourse in the fortieth year of the wilderness wanderings, before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Therefore, he was reminiscing about what had happened much earlier and how the Israelites had failed to obey God in entering the Promised Land.

**Deut. 1:2 (There are eleven days’ journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea.)**

Mount Seir, which is associated with Edom, is seen if one travels north from Mount Horeb on the right side of the Dead Sea. The Israelites disobeyed God by not entering the Promised Land at the beginning of the 40 years when He told them to go in. Later, of their own presumption, they tried to enter by going up the left side of the Dead Sea, and they suffered a terrific defeat at the hands of the Amorites. Now, finally, they had gotten to the plain of Jericho, where they were about to enter the Promised Land, having gone up the right (east) side of the Dead Sea.

Verse 2 is a parenthetical statement, an interjection into the account of what Moses spoke at the end of the 40 years the Israelites were in the wilderness. Moses was now up in the Jericho vicinity, far from Kadesh-barnea, reviewing the history of Israel.

Kadesh-barnea, which is on the left side of the Dead Sea, is where the Israelites tried to enter the land many years earlier. From Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea was an 11-day journey on foot, the distance being about 100 miles. Incidentally, by horse or camel the journey from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea was much shorter. On average, according to Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, a person traveling by camel goes 30 miles a day, by caravan 25 miles a day, and by foot 20 miles a day. Although the average person could travel 20 miles a day, the tremendous host of 2 million Israelites would cover about half that distance.

**Q:** Was Moses saying that the journey would have taken only 11 days if the Israelites had obeyed earlier?

**A:** Yes. Verses 1-5 are given to contrast two events: the actual entry into the Promised Land up near Jericho, which was about to take place, and an earlier experience.

Near the beginning of the 40 years, when the Israelites left Mount Horeb to go on their journey, God had said, “You have been dwelling here long enough.” They had dwelled at Mount Sinai for almost a full year, and now they were told to move on and follow the cloud wherever it would lead them. However, that instruction does not mean that 11 days later, they ended up in Kadesh-barnea. The account is just stating that it would take 11 days of ordinary travel to make the transit. (Actually, the Israelites went a three-day journey and stopped, and a lot of events happened. Then they traveled for several more days, and other events occurred, for example, the two temptations at Hazereth.)

It is interesting that before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they murmured ten times and disobeyed, causing God’s wrath to surface. These ten times all occurred prior to the entry of the spies into the Promised Land.

**Deut. 1:3** And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;

Now the narrative resumes. “And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake [the Book of Deuteronomy] unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had [previously] given him in commandment.” In other words, Moses repeated all over again, in the two long discourses, the instruction God had given him during the 40 years.

The fortieth year was the last year that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. Moses died about five weeks later, and then Joshua took over. These verses are introductory to the main or first discourse that Moses was about to give.

**Deut. 1:4** After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei:

Verse 4 brings us into the current situation as to where and when Moses began his discourse, that is, after he had slain Sihon, the king of the Amorites in Heshbon, their capital, and Og, the king of Bashan at Astaroth. “Og” reminds us of Gog, and a connection is inferred.

**Deut. 1:5** On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,

The term “this side Jordan” was the east side of the river, for it was in the land of Moab. Moses began to declare “this law,” that is, the Torah, the writings of the Law. Many say Deuteronomy is a repetition discourse of the Law—hence a review.

**Q:** Why did Moses feel it necessary to give this review?

**A:** Don’t we, as God’s students, or children, sometimes need several lessons in order to grasp a matter? But what surprises us is that of the multitude of Israelites, only two individuals (Joshua and Caleb) heeded the instruction. Thus we are given a possible insight, in a broad-brush statement, as to the proportion, or ratio, between the Little Flock and the professed people of God, which would include the true and the nominal.

**Comment:** Since all of the disobedient of the first generation had now died, Moses was speaking

to the second generation.

**Q:** In regard to those who died in the wilderness, wasn't it only those who were 20 years old and upward, except for Joshua and Caleb? Also, since the Levites were not numbered, they were not included in the penalty.

**A:** Yes, that is correct. Certainly the two priests of the older generation, Eleazar and Ithamar, entered the Promised Land. At least 2 million Israelites left Egypt, and at least 2 million entered the land.

**Deut. 1:6** The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

**Deut. 1:7** Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

**Deut. 1:8** Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

Verses 6-8 describe the land that was acquired during the reign of Solomon. The land extended up to the river Euphrates. Moses was reiterating the promise God had made to Israel at the time of the giving of the Law at Mount Horeb. Thus he repeated the extent of the territory of the Promised Land that would be given to Abraham and his seed. God had said, "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them."

When the spies secretly entered the Promised Land, they did not merely explore the lower part but actually went deep into the land. On their return journey, they brought back grapes from Eshcol (Num. 13:23-25).

Basically, the account is just telling that Moses gave his first discourse on the plain of Moab in the fortieth year about five weeks prior to the Israelites' entry into the land. The second (and much longer) discourse was given the same year just before they crossed the Jordan.

**Deut. 1:9** And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

**Deut. 1:10** The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Critics of the validity of Scripture say verse 10 is an overstatement—that the children of Israel about to enter the land were in number "as the stars of heaven for multitude." Actually, when properly considered, verse 10 is not a gross overstatement. The number of Israelites about to enter the Promised Land, in spite of the 2 million who died, was again 2 million, and this number can be compared to the *visible* stars of heaven. In other words, the naked eye, without a telescope, could see about 100,000 stars in the pure, unpolluted air back in Moses' day. The bottom line is that "stars of heaven for multitude" was just an expression.

**Deut. 1:11** (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)

It is interesting that the translators put an exclamation point in this parenthetical expression, showing they were emotionally involved.

**Deut. 1:12** How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?

**Deut. 1:13** Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

**Deut. 1:14** And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do.

**Deut. 1:15** So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.

**Deut. 1:16** And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

**Deut. 1:17** Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

**Deut. 1:18** And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Verses 12-18 tell of the alternate method of alleviating Moses from the burden of hearing the causes of all the people. When the Israelites left Egypt and entered a high plateau in Sinai, Moses sat on a rock in a valley gorge and the people came up to him with their cases for individual judgment. Even today the Arabs follow the tradition of going to the king for advice, instruction, or judgment. Moses was burdened in doing this for 2 million people, who were discontented and voicing grievances.

Notice what Moses did not say when reiterating this method of hearing the grievances of the people—that it was his father-in-law, Raguel (Jethro), who said the original procedure was too much. Raguel wisely suggested that Moses distribute his authority among others, and only when a problem was too difficult would it be brought to him. That way Moses would be relieved of a great burden. In giving this discourse, Moses knew his time was short, so he did not include all of the details that might have been told under other circumstances. Certainly his intention was not to take honor away from Raguel by not mentioning him here.

Incidentally, God gave great wisdom to those who framed the United States Constitution. Checks and balances were providentially incorporated, thus preventing the later development of a dictatorship.

Verse 17 states that God is not a respecter of persons in the *judgment of right and wrong*. However, he is a respecter of persons in other areas; for example, He chose Israel out of all the nations of earth. And not only did He choose the apostles from amongst believers, but Jesus chose three of the apostles—Peter, James, and John—for an inner fellowship. In the judgment of right and wrong, when a case came before a judge, two criteria were to be observed. (1) If a poor person had a grievance or a sad story of an injustice done to him, the judge was to judge righteously and not allow his emotions to influence his opinion or judgment, for a person's financial state has nothing to do with judgment. Emotional involvement can warp a judge's decision. (2) If the person with the grievance was rich, well dressed, and proud or bold, the

judge was to be fearless in making his decision. In other words, fear of man and concern about what others might think were not to influence judgment.

Sometimes a Christian may know that the majority of God's professed people will think he is doing the wrong thing, but he must judge righteously and fairly, nevertheless. It often helps to ask, "What would Jesus do?"

**Comment:** James 2:1-4 reads, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" The New Testament also cautions not to have respect of persons.

**Comment:** In Christian circles, there is the danger of relatives not saying anything in moral matters because they are family, and thus they look the other way.

**Deut. 1:19** And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

**Deut. 1:20** And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.

**Deut. 1:21** Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

Before discussing verse 19, we will again read verse 6 and part of verse 7: "The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto." What about God's statement to the Israelites that they had dwelled long enough in the mount? They were at Mount Sinai for about a year, and during that time, they were busily occupied in preparing the materials for the eventual construction of the Tabernacle. We are reminded that when we first consecrated, we had the privilege of drinking in the truth and flourishing and having the sunshine of favor. Usually each of us also had a severe trial, but that trial was a learning process. While the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, Moses read the Law aloud and instructed them in what they could and could not do, and in what they should and should not do—with regard to not only the ceremonial aspects of the Law but also the moral or instructional manner in which they should live. After the preparation was finished, it was time for the Israelites to go and have another experience.

We are reminded of the *Manna* text of June 4, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). The comment follows: "It is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days, when the sun of favor shone brightly upon you, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the Truth, and rearing the superstructure of Christian character. Now you are [to be] in the furnace to be proved: summon therefore all your courage; fortify your patience; nerve yourself to endurance; hold fast to your hope; call to mind the promises, [for] they are still yours; and 'cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' 'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.' 'Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him,' and faith has gained her victory."



Verse 6 and the initial part of verse 7 seem to tie in with verse 19. Verses 19-21 are more or less a direction of thought along one line. Verse 19 states that after the Israelites left Sinai, they were to go through the “great and terrible wilderness” on the way to Kadesh-barnea, which was the locale where, according to instruction, they were to take the stronghold of the Amorites. The “wilderness” was their trial period, their furnace of affliction. Similarly with us, after we get a foundation of the truth in the beginning of our Christian walk, most of us have very severe trials to overcome. Thus a “wilderness” experience comes before us.

When the natural Israelites got to Kadesh-barnea, Moses said, “Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us”; that is, “This mountain, which is occupied by the Amorites is ours.” In verse 21, Moses instructed, “Go up and possess it [the land of the Amorites].” Right away we are reminded of Genesis 15:16, where God said to Abram, “But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” God had just told Abram to cut various animals in parts to offer in sacrifice and then to go to Egypt, where his seed would be afflicted.

**Q:** Verses 7, 19, and 20 in the RSV use the term “hill country” instead of “mount” or “mountain of the Amorites.” What is the accurate thought?

**A:** The Amorites occupied the higher part of a mountain range so that they could observe the people who lay on the plain below in the land of Canaan and subject them to oppression.

At the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses was reviewing what the Israelites had done in the second year of their journey when spies were sent into the Land of Promise. Verse 4 speaks of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, who was much farther north but in a similar situation of domination. Deuteronomy 4:46,47 calls both kings Amorites because Og was also an Amorite, even though he was the king of Bashan.

“Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land [of the Amorites] before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.” Here we see the character of Moses—his confidence in God’s instruction and his great anticipation of victory.

**Comment:** Psalm 68:15,16 reads, “The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.” The hill of Bashan has been set aside for Israel.

**Reply:** The Psalmist David, who wrote at a much later period of time, spoke considerably about the Exodus and the experiences of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. Also, sprinkled throughout the Book of Deuteronomy itself are comments similar to those in Psalm 68:15,16.

**Deut. 1:22** And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

From the midst of the Israelites came forth a suggestion. The people implied they were more or less in agreement with what Moses had said and were willing to “go up” and possess the land of the Amorites, but they suggested that, first, it might be advisable to clandestinely or surreptitiously send into that land a certain number of spies to search out the best path of entry. The spies would bring back word “by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.”

**Deut. 1:23** And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:

The advice pleased Moses, and accordingly, 12 men, one from each tribe, were sent to search out the land.

**Deut. 1:24** And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.

**Deut. 1:25** And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us.

**Deut. 1:26** Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God:

At first, the people were willing to go up and possess the land, but when the 12 spies returned, there was a change of heart. Rebellion began to foment as to the inadvisability of heeding the Lord's instruction.

**Deut. 1:27** And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

Notice what the Israelites had said in their murmurings: "Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us." In spite of deliverance from the plagues, journeying through the Red Sea, the supply of manna, numerous other miracles, and correctional judgments, the older generation of Israelites, those 20 years of age and upward when they left Egypt, had this rebellious attitude. From the time of the Exodus until they arrived at Kadesh-barnea, which was only the second year of the wilderness journey, they rebelled ten different times. The Israelites were punished subsequently and prevented from entering the Promised Land until 38 years later.

**Comment:** Since the nation of Israel pictures the Church, it is sobering to realize that when difficulties arise, we, too, tend to lack faith in the Lord and murmur audibly or become fearful. Their attitude shows us what we have to overcome.

**Reply:** Yes, "all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

**Comment:** The murmuring was even more serious because it came forth from those who had served the longest in hard bondage to the Egyptians. They quickly forgot what it was like to be hit on the back with a whip and to be oppressed.

**Reply:** Yes. As new creatures, we should frequently reflect on how the Lord has dealt with us in the past. Even though the Scriptures say the promise is given unto us and our children, we could all testify that there was a miraculous nature in connection with our initial release from bondage to sin and our coming into the truth (Acts 2:39). The danger is in forgetting what the Lord has done for us. One of the chief faults of the Israelites is that they "forgot his [Jehovah's] works" in their deliverance from bondage (Psa. 78:11). Thus it is always helpful in times of trial and discouragement to reflect on the Lord's past leadings. Thinking about the precious promises helps us to surmount the difficulties.

**Deut. 1:28** Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and

moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

The nature of the report was that the walls of the city were so exceedingly high that they were “walled up to heaven.” The Israelites reasoned, “How would we climb over those high walls, and even if we did, the inhabitants inside are like giants in stature and strength compared to us.” The lesson to us as Christians is that when we weigh things from a *natural* standpoint, the enemy is greater and stronger than we are. Thus in our experiences in life, the only thing that can overcome difficulties is FAITH, and reflection is an element of faith. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith in God (1 John 5:4). “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

From a *natural* standpoint, the observation of the 12 spies who went into the land was correct, but the discouraging slant given by ten of those spies was another matter. Only Joshua and Caleb gave an encouraging report. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it [the land]; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). It is wonderful to see the character of Caleb and Joshua in viewing the enemy in the proper manner of *faith*. Faith is tested by doubt, but an overcoming faith dispels doubt.

**Comment:** “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

**Comment:** The spies who gave the bad report said that the cities were “walled, and very great” but not that they were “walled up to heaven” (Num. 13:28). Here was an exaggeration on how the people interpreted the negative report. Similarly, the fleshly tendency in our Christian walk is to fear an obstacle and make it look greater than the reality.

**Q:** Verse 28 refers to the Anakims, and Anak is mentioned in Numbers 13:22. Young’s *Analytical Concordance* defines both words as “giant(s).” Do these verses refer back to the fallen angels, whose genes came out in later generations?

**A:** It has been our thought that a remnant came through one of the wives of Noah’s sons. Thus that seed prospered to a certain extent. Several additional pertinent references come up later in Deuteronomy. At that time, it will be expedient to discuss this subject in more detail.

**Comment:** Og was also one of the giants (Deut. 3:11).

**Reply:** His height is indicated by the dimensions of his iron bedstead, which was 9 cubits long and 4 cubits wide, or 13 1/2 feet by 6 feet. We will discuss the details when we get to chapter 3. For now, we are just considering strands that are before us and making certain observations.

Hyperbole does have its place, however. We are reminded of the people’s intentions at the building of the Tower of Babel. They said, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach *unto heaven*” (Gen. 11:4). The implication was that if another flood occurred, the tower would be of such great height that those inside would be above the water.

**Q:** Since the statement about the walls going up to heaven was an exaggeration, could the assessment that the people were as big as the hybrid race also be an exaggeration?

**A:** It is true there was exaggeration. However, the specific dimensions of Og’s bed prove he was tremendous in size.

Although hyperbole has its place, we should never be discouraged in regard to obstacles that are ahead because the very fact they confront us indicates they are designed to be a test of our

faith. As Bro. Krebbs used to say, not only is the proof of our faith more valuable than silver or gold, but even the test that permits the exercise of faith is exceedingly more valuable than these metals (1 Pet. 1:7). Both the test and passing the test successfully are valuable. When trials are viewed in that light, we can say, “Let us go up at once, and possess [take] it.” It is encouraging to realize that the Lord must think favorably of us to allow an experience to come as a test.

**Deut. 1:29** Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.

Verses 29-33 are wonderful advice for us now as well as for the Israelites back there. Bro. Anton Frey drew many wonderful lessons for the Christian from the experiences in the Wilderness of Sinai—so much so that brethren associated him with the Tabernacle. He spoke so frequently on the subject that it was almost synonymous with his name. Spiritualizing the experiences of the natural Israelites was a very valuable and helpful ministry.

At the end of the 40 years, Moses addressed the Israelites, “[Back] Then [two years into the wilderness experience] I said unto you [the older generation, who had since died], Dread not, neither be afraid of them [the Amorites].”

**Comment:** In Psalm 78:21-24,27, David said God’s anger was kindled against Israel “because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven... He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea.” Even with all of the miracles, the Israelites murmured and forgot.

**Reply:** Yes, they still rebelled and refused to recognize the advice. Thus we see the importance of ever keeping in mind what the Lord has done for us in the past as well as in the present. Adding the past to the present helps us to have confidence in future trials that yet await us. Reflecting upon the character of God as a merciful Father and His past providences over our individual Christian lives gives support to our faith. If we are then obedient and overcome the difficulty, the very exercise of the experience in our mind, character, and life strengthens faith, for faith grows by opposition. Stated another way, the muscles of faith are developed through trials. How important the past is! Deuteronomy is history, but the lessons are very valuable.

**Comment:** In connection with the “fear” mentioned in verse 29, Isaiah 8:12 says, “Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.” In the coming church-state union, Satan will use the tool of fear.

**Reply:** Usually, it is the *suddenness* of a trial intruding upon the experience of the Christian that brings fear. When a trial comes gradually, we see the danger more clearly and can summon up strength through prayer, but the devil tries to surprise us by confronting us suddenly. We have often thought of brethren in Europe who were faithful at the time of the Nazi domination. They were in their own homes when suddenly there came a knock at the door—or a breaking down of the door—and the Gestapo rushed in. That abrupt intrusion into the homestead tested the mettle of the character of those brethren. An analogy is the roar of the lion, which has a paralyzing effect upon the victim. Hence we see the value and the importance of prophecy. Prophecy is a necessary ingredient to help stabilize our faith if and when such a circumstance enters into our experience.

**Q:** Was Jesus trying to teach the same lesson when he was asleep in the boat with his apostles during the fierce storm on the Sea of Galilee?

**A:** Yes, the principle is the same. The lesson is to recognize that God is for us and Jesus is

present. Then we will be able to overcome the elements that would otherwise be impossible, for we are no match for the devil in our own strength. By the grace of God and the faith that is instilled if we are faithful, we will overcome. People do not learn because they forget, and then the experience has to be repeated.

**Deut. 1:30 The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes;**

**Deut. 1:31 And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.**

“The LORD your God ... shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your [very] eyes; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how ... the LORD thy God bare thee, as a ... son.” God used another illustration with regard to the eagle: “For the LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He [God] found him [Jacob] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him” (Deut. 32:9-12). The cloud over the Israelites by day, providing shelter from the heat of the noonday sun, and the fire over them by night, giving illumination in their night journeys and encampments, should have been a stimulus to their faith. Such providential care should ever be kept in mind. Recall is one of our difficulties, but the Holy Spirit aids our recall *if* we remember to push the “recall button,” as it were.

**Comment:** Verses 30 and 31 remind us of the “Footprints” poem, where there is only one set of footprints in the sand because Jesus is carrying us.

**Reply:** The Song of Solomon contains a somewhat similar thought. The Bride class asks Jesus, “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” Jesus replies, “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents” (Song 1:7,8).

**Deut. 1:32 Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,**

“Yet ... ye did not believe the LORD your God.” These lessons for natural Israel, which are part of the value of studying the Book of Deuteronomy, were written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages are come (1 Cor. 10:11). The lessons are particularly pertinent for the end-time period of both the Jewish and the Gospel ages.

**Deut. 1:33 Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.**

**Deut. 1:34 And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying,**

**Deut. 1:35 Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers,**

**Deut. 1:36 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.**

**Deut. 1:37 Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.**

**Deut. 1:38** But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

Except for Caleb and Joshua, none of the older generation would enter the Promised Land excluding, of course, some of the tribe of Levi, who were not in this picture. In other words, of the original older generation, which was roughly age 20 and above at the time of the Exodus, only these two individuals would enter. If the multitude numbered approximately 2 million people at the time of the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, and only two entered the Promised Land, then perhaps the colloquial expression “one in a million” has a basis in that account, indicating an exceptional individual. Even the world uses that expression for someone of unusual character who is an example to others. From a spiritual standpoint, perhaps one out of a million believers makes his (or her) calling and election sure to inherit a spot in the Bride class. Thus the saying may be true in more ways than one.

**Comment:** Two Scriptures from the Book of Numbers show that the Levites were not included in the penalty because they were not numbered. “But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them” (Num. 1:47). “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me” (Num. 14:29).

In the original older generation, there were 600,000 men of war. If they were between the ages of, say, 20 and 50, there were perhaps a million male adults and a million female adults. These hypothetical figures give us a hold on the situation. What is very unusual is that at that time, as far as the account of the lineage is concerned in the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, the males were quite numerous. For instance, Jacob had 12 sons and one daughter. The proportion is different today when females outnumber males almost 2.5 to 1.

**Comment:** In verse 35, only the men were condemned, not the women.

**Reply:** Based on the Book of Exodus and mathematics, probably not more than 2.25 million Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Thus only a certain portion of the males was numbered. The younger generation and those older than age 50 are not discussed.

**Q:** Were the women of that generation excluded from the condemnation?

**A:** The account does not say directly, but inferentially, we think so.

**Comment:** Joshua’s saying, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,” shows that he had a faithful wife (Josh. 24:15). Here the condemnation was on the men of war because they refused to go into the land.

**Reply:** By inference, we are not to make the distinction between men and women in this instance. In types and antitypes, that which is omitted is purposely left out. Therefore, to consider the omission would blur the intended lesson. For us to try to prove that a few women of that generation entered the Promised Land would be disingenuous.

**Comment:** It is interesting that the name Caleb means “bold,” “impetuous,” and he is singled out as being the most outspoken with regard to the spies and the giving of a favorable report.

**Comment:** The promise given to Caleb differed somewhat from the promise given to Joshua.

**Reply:** Joshua represented Jesus when the Israelites entered the Promised Land but not before.

Moses and Aaron have multiple representations depending upon the particular perspective or picture. For instance, Moses can represent God or a Second Death class, among other things. As a type, Caleb represents Jesus from a human standpoint—prior to entry into the Promised Land.

The Book of Deuteronomy was given at the time Moses was about to transfer his authority over to Joshua. In the book, Moses gave two main discourses plus a third short discourse. The basic lesson of verses 34-38 is how few of the older generation entered the Promised Land.

**Comment:** Verse 37 refers to Moses' sharing in the penalty of the disobedient Israelites because he struck the rock twice at Meribah (Num. 20:8-13). Therefore, he could not enter the land.

**Reply:** Yes, that presumptuous act was a leading factor as to why Moses did not enter the Promised Land. Of course he was not a perfect man, but God gave His approval that Moses was faithful (Heb. 3:2). Like Abraham and other individuals of the Old Testament who are Ancient Worthies, Moses is listed as praiseworthy and faithful, but that commendation does not mean they did not do something at some time in their life that was not proper.

**Comment:** Numbers 20:12 shows that the penalty of disobedience was on Aaron as well, and he died shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

Moses was tried quite severely in that incident. On the one hand, all the murmuring of the Israelites was not an excuse for forgetting himself, but on the other hand, we, as Christians, also act inordinately at times. Each of us, since consecration, has done things that we are sorry for, things that we know are wrong. If we were judged as strictly as Moses was in the type, we would not inherit the antitypical Promised Land. Moses' intentional act of disobedience in smiting the rock twice—and there may have been other acts that are not recorded in Holy Writ—pictures crucifying Christ afresh, which means Second Death in antitype (Heb. 6:6). However, the fact God purposely had this act recorded as a type of Second Death does not necessarily mean that individuals who have done something completely incompatible with their consecration vows have committed the sin unto Second Death. The Pastor reasoned that one is judged according to the *degree* of culpability, that is, the *measure of willfulness*. For example, under the Mosaic Law, the brother of a murdered victim could slay the murderer, unless the perpetrator got to the city of refuge in time. The courts recognize the difference between slaying someone on the spur of the moment in the heat of anger and premeditated, deliberate murder, which merits the full penalty both literally and spiritually. This is one lesson we can get by reading the Book of Deuteronomy, for Moses brought up case after case of the Israelites' acts of disobedience.

**Deut. 1:39** Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.

One of the Israelites' favorite excuses for their murmurings was that God had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness to kill not only them but also their offspring; that is, the Israelites used concern for their offspring as an excuse to sin, but there was no excuse. A spiritual lesson is that a son may enter the Kingdom and the parent does not, or vice versa. An example in Scripture is that David was faithful, but his son Absalom was not. We can all be instructed by these lessons—whatever the relationship: mother, father, wife, husband, son, etc. Many examples are given, both favorable and unfavorable. God's judgments are based not on family relationships but on principles. What about Rechab, whose progeny were faithful for many years? "Jonadab the son of Rechab ... commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant

vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab ... in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us” (Jer. 35:6-10). With many examples and lessons of all kinds in the Scriptures—backwards, forwards, up, and down—we should not get high-minded, yet we can receive encouragement. Thus there are both warnings and encouragements.

**Deut. 1:40** But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

What was the “way of the Red sea” into the wilderness? Many Bible maps are filled with errors as far as the identification of places and towns such as Kadesh-barnea and Paran. At this time, when Moses was giving this discourse, he and the Israelites were way up north in the plain of Moab in the vicinity of Jericho, generally speaking. Moses subsequently went to the top of Pisgah to view the Promised Land and was finally buried not far from that area (Deut. 34:1-6). When Joshua took over, it was not long before the Israelites were only 2,000 cubits from where they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

From that area up to the north, we believe the Israelites had to go way down near the Red Sea, and they traveled in the Arabah, in the valley. In this learning experience, they had to retrace, to some extent, the path they had already taken, although previously the route was a little more favorable, for the terrain was different in going northward to enter the Promised Land.

The Israelites had left Mount Horeb, and the distance between Horeb and where they were in Kadesh-barnea was an 11 days’ journey by foot (Deut. 1:2). We get a feeling of the distance and the hardships that were involved. When we do something wrong after consecration, we sometimes have to go back and mentally retrace our steps, and we are encouraged by seeing how the Lord led us up to the point of the infraction. That is where God’s patience enters in. The best cure for one who is consecrated and young is to be active in the Lord’s service. The activity helps to minimize—but not eliminate—the nature of the experiences and trials.

There are profitable lessons for us in the mistakes made by the older generation of Israelites, for the misdeeds call attention to the direction in which we might be heading and provide warnings. Warnings help us to make straight paths for our feet (Heb. 12:13).

The Israelites were to take their journey by the way of the Arabah leading down to the Red Sea. Some maps show the Israelites going down south, retracing their steps, and then circling back up northward toward Edom and Moab before entering the Promised Land. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses reviewed the experiences of the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. Here he gave a brief account of their earlier experiences in leaving Horeb, and in later chapters, he expanded into the more current experiences.

**Deut. 1:41** Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD, we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.

**Deut. 1:42** And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies.

**Deut. 1:43** So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.



**Deut. 1:44** And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah.

The Israelites admitted they had sinned but then disobeyed again. Ignoring the commandment of God, they tried to overcome their fault in their own strength. Many brethren testify that during their Christian life, they were fighting a certain problem but were not getting the victory until they realized they were trying to overcome in their own strength. What is necessary is prayer, asking the Lord's help, to get over a hurdle or fault. And that is what the Israelites failed to do here in going up presumptuously. God even gave the advice, "Go not up," but they went anyway. These incidents in the type illustrate hard lessons experienced by some of the Lord's people, for they show the intended victory—how and when and why the fault or problem should be handled according to the Lord's specific instructions.

Incidentally, Israel's leaving Mount Horeb represents our initial consecration. When we were at Mount Horeb in our experiences, we said, like the children of Israel, "All these things we will do." We recognized God and made a commitment to serve Him until death. "Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do" (Exod. 24:3). But after the commitment came the battle. When the Israelites left Horeb and went up to the mountain of the Amorites, the journey the Lord led them through took two years (one year from Mount Sinai)—considerably more than 11 days!

After the construction of the Tabernacle, God said the Israelites had been at Mount Horeb long enough and it was time to leave. At first, He led them by a certain path, but then He took them into "the great and terrible wilderness" (Deut. 1:19). With some in antitype, the "terrible wilderness" is the valley of depression. The point is that the Book of Deuteronomy contains valuable lessons for the Christian, but the lessons usually have to be extracted individually in privacy rather than in a class study lest we get bogged down with all of our problems. The lessons are proper and profitable for private meditation, for we have quite an experience in the antitypical Wilderness of Sinai. In growing older, we find that while we get certain victories, we have more faults than we had realized. The awareness comes that subconsciously we think too highly of ourselves. However, the Lord knows our condition, and it is good to have some optimism. Otherwise, we would be very discouraged and in a sad state. The Apostle Paul took an attitude of encouragement in his epistles. Nevertheless, when we do wrong, we will get retribution in the present life—as he did, for he was consecrated before he persecuted Christians. Although he had given his heart to God, he did not see Jesus in a new way until he had an experience on the way to Damascus. All of these helpful lessons encourage us and keep us from giving up. The purpose of the lessons is to benefit us in private study and meditation on the Word and thus to enable us to see what to do and what not to do.

**Deut. 1:45** And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.

**Deut. 1:46** So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode there.

In chapter 1, Moses was giving the historical account of what happened prior to the event momentarily pending, namely, the Israelites' entrance into the Holy Land. Moses spoke to the people: "After you had been at Horeb for a while, God said you were there long enough. He instructed you to go north to the mountain of the Amorites and to enter in and possess the land, which He had promised to the fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Thus Moses gave instruction and a message of promise to the Israelites, implying that God would enable them to be successful. However, when they departed Mount Horeb (Sinai) and went through the

terrible wilderness and arrived at Kadesh-barnea, their spirits were a little dubious, so a suggestion was made to send spies to search out the land prior to actual entry. Moses thought the suggestion was a good idea, and the Lord agreed, so 12 spies were sent out.

Moses was recapping the instruction the Lord had given the Israelites. God told the spies what to do when they saw the Promised Land. “And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes” (Num. 13:17-20).

When the spies first entered the land, they were to see if it was good or bad. On a mountain with the land before them, they were to look and give a broad prospectus. In a closer look during their search for 40 days, they were to find out whether the people were strong or weak, whether the land was fat or lean, and whether or not it was wooded. Next they were told to be of good courage and to bring back some fruit of the land, for it was the season of first-ripe grapes. All of these instructions have an antitypical lesson. For example, the Israelites’ leaving Mount Horeb represents the Lord’s people at the time of consecration, when they say in effect, “All these things we will do.” They subsequently go out and have an antitypical journey through a “terrible wilderness,” a period of great stress including parting from family, but then they sober up and contemplate what things are to be done.

When the spies returned after 40 days of searching the land, they testified that it flowed with milk and honey, just as God had said. But then they gave a discouraging report: “You told us to see if the inhabitants were strong or weak, and we saw the children of Anak, particularly his three giant sons [Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai—Num. 13:22]. We felt like grasshoppers in their sight.”

In Deuteronomy, Moses reviewed many of the experiences that are recorded in the books of Exodus and Numbers. The repetition was like saying, “God always repeats Himself two or three times on important issues to certify that these matters merit contemplation.”

Of their own presumption after failing to enter the Land of Promise the first time, the Israelites subsequently tried to enter and were defeated in battle. As a punishment, they had to abide in Kadesh “many days” (a figurative term that can mean “many years,” as it does here). Now, 40 years later, Moses was reviewing the experiences of the Israelites.

**Deut. 2:1** Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.

**Deut. 2:2** And the LORD spake unto me, saying,

**Deut. 2:3** Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

**Deut. 2:4** And command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore:

**Deut. 2:5** Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a footbreadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.

**Deut. 2:6** Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.

**Deut. 2:7** For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.

**Deut. 2:8** And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Ezion-geber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.

Verses 1-8 are a recap of the instructions that were given to the Israelites when they eventually went far northward toward the entry into the Promised Land. At that time, they had to pass through Edom and the land of Moab, which were directly before them. The first obstacle was entry into the land of Mount Seir, the possession of Edom, the land of Esau.

The Edomites were afraid in spite of the assurances that the Israelites would not meddle in any of their affairs but would pass through the land peacefully, buying enough food and water to sustain them in the journey. Because of the Edomites' fear, the Israelites had to circle around in the plain of Edom down below. They were left in a dilemma, but as in the past, the Lord provided for them. In fact, the Lord had always provided for them, even though there were times when they hungered and thirsted *temporarily*. Following temporary testing periods, the Israelites were abundantly refreshed, even though they usually did not pass the test too successfully. As Christians, we are provided for spiritually.

**Q:** Are Elath and Ezion-geber at the north end of the Red Sea where Eilat is today?

**A:** Yes. In other words, after staying a long time in Kadesh-barnea, the Israelites started to move, but instead of going in the direction of the Promised Land, they went in the opposite direction down the Arabah to what is called the Gulf of Eilat today. Then they had to retrace their steps in a long, trying journey on foot. In addition, they had to circuit the wadis and Mount Seir, which is no small mountain, several times. Thus the Israelites went around in circles, hither and yon, and the Lord's people are sometimes tested with similar experiences; that is, they seem to be getting nowhere in their spiritual development. All of the Israelites' experiences are meant to be instructive and helpful to the Lord's people as new creatures.

**Deut. 2:9** And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.

**Deut. 2:10** The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims;

**Deut. 2:11** Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims.

**Deut. 2:12** The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them.

**Deut. 2:13** Now rise up, said I, and get you over the brook Zered. And we went over the brook Zered.

**Deut. 2:14** And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them.

**Deut. 2:15** For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.

The Israelites dwelled at Mount Sinai for approximately one year, and then, instead of going an 11-day journey to the Promised Land, they abode in one place for seven days, searched the land for 40 days, and were defeated by the Amorites as a punishment for not entering the land. In all, two years elapsed of the journey of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. Since God had now purposed that they would remain in the wilderness for a total of 40 years, there remained 38 years to be consumed before they could enter the Promised Land. At the time Moses was giving this sermon in the Book of Deuteronomy, the time setting was the fortieth year. In fact, it was a month and a half before the actual entry into the land under the leadership of Joshua.

Verses 9-15 review certain points. The Israelites were to enter the land of Moab, but the Moabites refused to give them free access along the King's Highway, which was the shorter, more desirable route from Egypt to Damascus, Syria. This higher road was better than the lower road because one did not suffer the scorching heat of the sun, normally speaking. In addition, the higher road afforded pasturage, water, and other conveniences on the journey. Therefore, the popular route to Damascus was the King's Highway. Originally, the Israelites wanted to pursue this route, but because the Edomites and the Moabites were reluctant to let them do so, the people had to journey on the lower, dryer plain.

Verse 9 contains interesting detail about the Moabites. God instructed the Israelites that they were not to have any possessions in Moab and Ammon because He had promised the lands to Lot's two children of those names. Nor were the Israelites to occupy any land that had been promised to Esau.

The land the Israelites bypassed was a land of giants in olden times, in the days of Noah. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we are reading about conditions at the time of the Exodus and the Israelites' entry into the Promised Land in the days of Moses, which was a much later time. The children of Anak multiplied in times past, and now the progeny of the sons of Anak were dwelling in the lands of Moab, Seir, and Ammon. The same progeny—all giants—had various names: Zamzummims, Emims, Anakims, Zuzims, and Avims. A more geographical name was the Horims, who dwelled in Seir. Incidentally, Aaron died in Mount Hor, which was in the vicinity of Mount Seir (Deut. 32:50). The point is that all five names refer to the same progeny, who were of gigantic stature. These giants and their background will be discussed when we come to chapter 3, which provides a further dimension that should accompany the explanation.

**Comment:** It is ironic that the children of Israel did not go in to possess the Promised Land because of the unfavorable reports of the ten spies about giants in the land, yet at the end of the 40-year wanderings, the Israelites ended up in the lands where giants dwelled.

**Reply:** Giants were on both sides—in the land of Canaan as well as east of the Jordan River.

When the 12 spies went into the Promised Land, they reported that there were three particular sons of Anak, the parent giant (Num. 13:22). Those three sons have a spiritual significance for the Christian, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the experiences of Christian life, one or more of these sons, in one or another shape or form, are involved with the spiritual testing of each of us. The test with the world, the flesh, and the devil comes in a variety of

forms—Zamzummims, Emims, Anakims, Zuzims, Avims, and Horims—but when studied, the variety narrows down to one of these three particular giants as the backbone of the trial that besets us in our Christian journey. To state the matter again, the Zamzummims, Emims, Anakims, Zuzims, Avims, and Horims were all the same progeny, which boiled down to the three sons of the one father, Anak.

**Q:** Weren't there Rephaims too (Gen. 14:5; 15:20)?

**A:** Yes, but we are intentionally avoiding them for now. The Rephaims are hard to understand unless we have the background just explained. The connection with that expression, which pertains to "darkness," then becomes more readily apparent. The thought of "darkness" helps with the explanation to a considerable extent.

The Israelites were to "touch not" the lands of Moab and Ammon but were to turn northward and go on their journey as the Lord would lead them before passing over the river Jordan. Our current approach in studying Deuteronomy is a hop, a skip, and a jump because the book is so little studied and understood. It is better to get a brief explanation first, before going into some of the nitty-gritty details.

Another interesting point is that three rivers were east of the Jordan in the lands of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. The rivers were Zered, Arnon, and Jabbok (Deut. 2:13; Num. 21:24). The Israelites had to cross the Jabbok because eventually they were to possess land north of that river, but at this time, they were not to interfere or dillydally because the river coursed through the territory of Ammon. By being able to understand a sufficient number of names, we are guided through the land. The considerable number of names we do not understand at present will be thoroughly understood in the Kingdom Age. Those names will be particularly beneficial and instructional for the world of mankind, and they will probably be accompanied with pictures of the actual locations. The people in the Kingdom will receive plenty of constructive cinematic lessons based on events, history, and places that are recorded in the Scriptures. The Bible is a lamp to our feet now, but it will be illuminated sevenfold when it is thoroughly understood in the future. The wisdom and foresight of God will thus be shown. To God, the future is the past—it is done, finished, accomplished!

"And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed. So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people...." (Deut. 2:14-16). An inheritance east of the Jordan River was given to 2 1/2 tribes of Israel. Edom was given to Esau, and half the land of Moab was given to the Moabites. The northern part of Moab was a possession of one of the 2 1/2 tribes. It was said only of Edom that the Israelites would not get a foot in it.

**Deut. 2:16** So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people,

**Deut. 2:17** That the LORD spake unto me, saying,

**Deut. 2:18** Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day:

**Deut. 2:19** And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.

**Deut. 2:20** (That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims;

**Deut. 2:21** A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead:

**Deut. 2:22** As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day:

**Deut. 2:23** And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.)

**Deut. 2:24** Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle.

Verse 24 ends this part of the account with the Israelites passing over the river Arnon. The Caphtorims are a big subject that is highly conjectural. Also, these verses tell that the Israelites had a battle with the Amorite king, Sihon.

From a spiritual standpoint, this land of the giants can also be given a generalized application along the lines of what the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:12. We fight not against flesh and blood only but against principalities, powers, the rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places. There is not a lot of information about these occult powers, who are the “giants,” the fallen angels. Just as on this side of the veil, we are given some insight that Jesus was the Logos and that Gabriel is a faithful angel, so in the occult world, we know that Satan exists along with his compatriots in demonism. And there are other powers for whom we are not given any instruction in the present life. The various accounts of the giants in Deuteronomy will be revealed to the world in the Kingdom from the natural standpoint, and they will be revealed to the Church beyond the veil from the spiritual standpoint.

**Q:** Is verse 16 a proof that the only Israelites under condemnation to death in the wilderness were the men of war?

**A:** Although we do not want to get into semantics, the women were also included in the condemnation. The parameters have to be narrowed down to an extent where, inferentially, we are left with no other alternative. The men of war picture the consecrated. Figuratively speaking, Christians are in danger of extinction in the present age, as shown by the wandering of the children of Israel through the Wilderness of Sinai. This subject is complex.

Deuteronomy is a deep book that is packed with information. Intended as a long-lasting lesson, it is particularly concentrated for that purpose. In the future, the book will be thoroughly understood from both the natural and the spiritual standpoints.

**Deut. 2:25** This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.

Now the Israelites were near the Jordan River in the territory of Ammon. Verse 25 reminds us of Rahab the harlot's confession to the spies, for all of Jericho's inhabitants were aware of what God had done for Israel in the Exodus and in the Wilderness of Sinai in their earlier conquest of

the Amalekites. The Israelites prospered in that battle when Moses' hands were held up in the shape of a cross (Exod. 17:10-12). It is interesting that the Amalekites occupied the south, that is, from Beer-sheba southward, all the way down through the Wilderness of Zin and almost to Mount Sinai. The Canaanites dwelled in the shore land, and the Hittites occupied the mountain range that coursed through the land of Israel north and south, going all the way up to Mount Hermon. On the west side of the Jordan River, the Hittites occupied the northern third of Israel, the Jebusites lived in the middle, and Amorites dwelled in the bottom third.

The report of the Israelites caused fear, and of course the city of Jericho would eventually fear the most, for that is where they entered the land. The people of Jericho and Rahab heard the report and greatly feared, even though they had natural protection with their fortress and wall.

**Comment:** The Israelites were promised that if they obeyed, others would fear them, but if they disobeyed, the opposite would occur; namely, they would fear and run, even when others were not chasing them (Lev. 26:6-8,17,36-38).

**Reply:** Earlier, when the spies brought back the report, the people of the land, especially the giants, looked on the Israelites as if they were grasshoppers, and the Israelites felt like grasshoppers, whereas God had told them that their viewpoint should be the opposite. With His help and through His power, they would be successful if obedient, but they disobeyed.

**Deut. 2:26** And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,

King Sihon of Heshbon was an Amorite. The Amorites occupied both sides of the Jordan, or the Aqaba wadi, which led down to the Red Sea. That whole ravine divides Israel from what is now Jordan. The Israelites were originally instructed to invade the Promised Land from the south on the west side of Jordan, but in the final analysis, they entered the land on the east side.

Moab occupied a large area up to the Jordan River. The northern half of Moab extended from the middle of the Dead Sea on the east side, up to the river Jordan in the Jericho vicinity. That upper half of Moab was controlled by an alien force, not the Moabites. The Israelites were now confronting King Sihon.

Heshbon, the capital and main city of the Amorites, was on the east side of the Jordan River. The Israelites were originally asked to go up into the mountain of the Amorites, which was on the other (west) side of the Jordan. Generally speaking, the Amorites more or less controlled both the east and the west sides of the Jordan River. For that reason, the Israelites could not enter the Promised Land until the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Gen. 15:16). Now their iniquity had come to a fullness, so it was time for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land.

**Deut. 2:27** Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left.

**Deut. 2:28** Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet;

**Deut. 2:29** (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us.

Verses 27 and 28 tell what Moses said to King Sihon through messengers. He was saying that the king need not fear. The "highway" did not go through the middle of Heshbon but skirted

the border of the city. Nevertheless, the Amorites were nervous as to the intent of the Israelites. This northern desert road, which went from Egypt to Damascus, was designed to facilitate speedy travel, so it did not go through the middle of cities and had a minimum of obstruction. Moses was saying that he would stay on the road and not enter the cities, but he would appreciate being able to purchase supplies to feed the multitude en route. In other words, Moses wanted to negotiate with the Amorites in a peaceful manner.

“Only I will pass through on my feet.” Moses was saying that the Israelites would pass through in an orderly fashion and not allow any stragglers to do mischief. By being on foot, as opposed to having horses and chariots, they would not be a threat. Their intentions were peaceful.

The Israelites were equipped for hand-to-hand combat had they wanted to use swords, for they had acquired weapons from the Egyptian soldiers at the time of the Exodus. When the sea covered the Egyptians, the armor washed up on the shore on the Sinai side of the Red Sea. Viewing the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, the Israelites could see the sea cover them. The scene was very climactic, for Pharaoh was almost through the sea to the other side when the waves engulfed him.

**Deut. 2:30** But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day.

King Sihon’s spirit was hardened like that of Pharaoh with the ten plagues. God knows that when one speaks peaceably to some people, they look upon the peaceable words as a spirit of weakness and an invitation to plunder. And so King Sihon did not see as a good quality the graciousness and peaceable spirit that God had instructed Moses to use. Much of how we view matters and the Lord’s promises depends on the condition of our heart and the spirit within us. Certainly King Sihon felt he had a golden opportunity to exploit the Israelites and take all of their goods. To him, the Israelites appeared to be an easy prey, even though they were great in number. By inference because he was singled out by name, Sihon was a giant, so he regarded the Israelites as hapless victims. Og, the king of Bashan, was also a giant (Deut. 3:1,11).

To the unconsecrated, to worldly people with the wrong heart condition, the spirit of peace is viewed in a completely different manner than is intended. Moses was saying, “We respect you and your rights, and we hope you will respect our rights,” but King Sihon’s heart became obstinate because of a wrong spirit. “God hardened his [Sihon’s] spirit, and made his heart obstinate, [so] that he [God] might deliver him into thy [the Israelites’] hand.” When King Sihon did not accept the Israelites peaceably, the Lord gave them a justified go-ahead to fight the Amorites. Of course in the Christian age, we are to suffer abuse and not render evil for evil under any circumstance, but back there was another matter where justice was concerned.

**Q:** What is the timing of the phrase “as appeareth this day”?

**A:** The Book of Deuteronomy has many similar interruptions that are properly attributed to Ezra. In trying to make the book an orderly, sequential composition, he also inserted, at a much later time, “modern” names that were not in existence in Moses’ day so that the reader of a later generation could identify where an event took place. Some attribute the insertions to Joshua, and that is probably true in a few cases, but Ezra was responsible for most of them.

**Comment:** Verse 30 gives Moses’ observation that the obstinacy of King Sihon’s heart was *providential*, that it would work for *good* to the Israelites.

**Reply:** Yes, it gave them justification. Moses was a most unusual person. In studying his life,



we see that he was next to Jesus and probably one of the greatest men in history, even superior to the Apostle Paul. The Pastor came to the same conclusion, as stated in one sentence in a *Reprint* article. Moses' thinking, reasoning, and capabilities were extraordinary, but he lived too early to be of the Little Flock. Similarly, John the Baptist was greater than any other of his generation, but he was not given the opportunity of the high calling. Had they lived later, certainly they would have made wondrous progress in the Gospel Age and received crowns.

**Deut. 2:31** And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.

**Deut. 2:32** Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz.

**Deut. 2:33** And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.

**Deut. 2:34** And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:

In all of these Amorite cities, not one person was left alive. In reading about the bloodletting of the Old Testament, we have been greatly blessed with Harvest truth to know that all in their graves will come forth in the Kingdom Age and have an opportunity for life under the most favorable conditions. This knowledge of the opportunity for salvation for the world puts an entirely different slant on many of the things God did in former times. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to understand the goodness and the love of God—unless we viewed the bloodletting from another perspective, which we will do at a later time, God willing.

We also see that the killing was typical. The Pastor justified the killing from the standpoint of the future coming forth from the grave and also from the standpoint of its being typical of how the Christian has to treat sin. We cannot reason with the old man because the old man would get the victory and win the discussion. Satan is right there with counsel if the old man is wanting in any of his reasoning.

**Deut. 2:35** Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.

The Israelites were given the liberty of taking a spoil, which is different from the instruction to King Saul, who was told to destroy everything, even the animals. The Prophet Samuel asked Saul, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Sam. 15:14). The lesson was *obedience*, for in regard to God's Word, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). Thus God has a good reason—even if we do not know it—for doing one thing on one occasion and something a little different on another occasion. The very fact there are differences is an incitement for us to want to know, if possible, why God makes distinctions, so that we can reason as much as possible like He does. As His children, we want to imitate our Father. A factor that may prevent us from understanding God's reasons is lack of maturity or worthiness.

**Q:** Were the Israelites allowed to take the cattle for food? When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were told to destroy all the trees of their enemies except the fruit-bearing trees.

**A:** Yes, the cattle were for food. Moses' request to purchase food was denied by Sihon, but God supplied the food in this other manner. With regard to the fruit-bearing trees, kindness to the trees was a factor. As the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan, every foot they took was by faith. In many instances, they met strong opposition from the inhabitants of the land, but if

faith was exercised, God would do the rest. We do not usually think of kindness to trees, but a special consideration was to be given. The other trees were used for building and for battering rams in warfare. Mercy to the poor of the land was another factor.

**Deut. 2:36 From Aroer, which is by the brink of the river of Arnon, and from the city that is by the river, even unto Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us:**

The river Arnon was the southern border of the land King Sihon controlled at this time, but it formerly belonged to Moab. While God promised that Moab and Ammon would not lose their inheritance because they were the children of Lot, the promise did not preclude the fact that Moab could lose half of the land. Moab was assured of a permanent possession, but a portion will be given to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh as part of Israel's inheritance in the Kingdom Age. These tribes were also given the land in the days of Joshua after they helped their Israelite compatriots fight on the west side of the Jordan River. After winning the battles, they could return to this land on the far side of Jordan, but meanwhile, they left their little ones and their wives behind and went to conquer the Promised Land. The 2 1/2 tribes reasoned with God that they liked the land, and they asked to have it as their inheritance. The Lord graciously granted their request after they did the required fighting in Israel proper.

Notice the name *Aroer*. The many "ar" derivatives in the Old Testament are associated with the land of Ar—similar to the land of Uz.

**Deut. 2:37 Only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not, nor unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains, nor unto whatsoever the LORD our God forbade us.**

With regard to the stipulation not to trifle with "the cities of the mountains," Edom and Moab were very mountainous, and there was also mountainous terrain on the right side of Ammon. The four rivers Zered, Arnon, Jabbok, and Jordan are helpful in learning the proper geography when considering the fate, or outcome, of Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

**Deut. 3:1 Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.**

When the 40 years in the Wilderness of Sinai are considered as a whole, the Israelites stayed many years in one location, and then they went on a long, scorching journey down the Arabah to the Red Sea. Afterward they came back and went around in circles, getting nowhere. Therefore, the "wanderings" aspect of the term "wilderness wanderings" aptly describes the 40-year experience of the Israelites. Seeming to go around in circles and getting nowhere has a parallel with the experiences of spiritual Israelites down through the Dark Ages.

Verse 1 focuses attention on a specific battle that the Israelites had with Og, the king of Bashan. When the Israelites started from the south end of the Dead Sea and turned and went around the Edomites, they traveled progressively northward into the plains of Moab opposite Jordan. As they continued on before entering the Promised Land, they went up into Bashan, which is in the land of Gilead far to the north. Thus this warfare took place in the northern portion of land on the east side of the Jordan River. At Edrei, King Og came out to battle against the Israelites.

When the kingdom of Israel was divided in two, Rehoboam, the king of Judah, occupied the land to the south, and Jeroboam, the king of Israel, occupied the land in the north, where he instituted the worship of golden calves at Dan and Beth-el. We now have a general geographic description of the journeying of the Israelites.

**Deut. 3:2 And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.**

God said not to fear King Og, for He would deliver the king and all of the people into the hands of the Israelites, as had happened with King Sihon of the Amorites. The account singles out these two kings on the far side of the Jordan River. King Og was way up north, and the Ammonites were south of Bashan at the northern part of the Dead Sea. Thus the progression was from the south end of the Dead Sea, going north step-by-step, up to parallel where the Ammonites were and on up into Bashan. Then the Israelites came back down to the south and were ready to cross the Jordan after Moses' decease. (Lest there be confusion, King Sihon occupied the land of Ammon, even though he was an Amorite. Moab and Ammon were given to the sons of Lot with those names. These two personalities were a real trial to the Israelites.)

**Deut. 3:3 So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining.**

**Deut. 3:4 And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.**

**Deut. 3:5 All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many.**

**Deut. 3:6 And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city.**

God delivered Og, the king of Bashan, into the hand of the Israelites, who smote until no men, women, or children remained. All 60 walled cities were taken plus many unwalled towns.

The Apostle Paul was a Hebrew, and with regard to a Hebraism, much of his reasoning started from the bottom and went up; then it turned around and went from the top to the bottom. Instead of his repeating the same thing in the same sequence, sometimes the sequence went in one direction, and then, without warning, it went in the opposite direction. Purposely done in the Jewish language, this type of teaching, which we of the West are not accustomed to, was very good. Depending on what period of history is being considered, the Asiatic peoples have been trained to read from the bottom up and from the top down. This type of reasoning was used to see if the listeners were paying attention. And our Heavenly Father also used this method of teaching on different occasions to wake us up to the fact that there is some importance to what is being stated, even though the subject may be rather monotonous.

**Deut. 3:7 But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves.**

Only the cattle were taken as a spoil. Note: Verses 8-11 will be discussed after the explanation of the "giants" (the Rephaim).

**Deut. 3:8 And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon;**

**Deut. 3:9 (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)**

**Deut. 3:10 All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.**

**Deut. 3:11 For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.**

Instead of the word “giants” in verses 11 and 13 of the King James, the Revised Standard uses “Rephaim,” as follows: “(For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit.) ... the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, that is, all the region of Argob, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (The whole of that Bashan is called the land of Rephaim.” The “im” at the end of *Rephaim* indicates plurality, the word being a general term for a people or a race.

The Hebrew term *Rephaim* includes the Anakims, who occupied the land of the Amorites; the Emims of Moab; the Horims of Edom; and the Zamzummims of the Ammonites. Previous to these were a people called the Avims, but the Caphtorims of the island of Crete came to land, to the shore, and destroyed the Avims, even though they were on the other side of the Dead Sea. Others have tried to explore the period of the Caphtorims, but it is a big blank in history. The subject is of some interest, however, for in another place, the Lord made an intriguing statement about them, which we will not discuss now.

When all of these “ims” are lumped together, they are the Rephaim. Thus *Rephaim* is an all-embracing term that combines these peoples as being the progeny of the fallen angels. Because the subject is in God’s Word here in Deuteronomy, we will now discuss it.

The creation of Adam was a startling event—to see God’s creation of a physical, material being in diminutive or miniature form that was a likeness of spirit beings, who are of an ethereal, spiritual nature. When the angels looked down, they saw a tiny physical being with one head, two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth, two arms, and two legs *just like they had!* In other words, human beings are a resemblance of angelic beings but are in a physical format. Being surprised at seeing Adam, the angels sang with joy because they realized he could speak and reason, and he was handsome. How startling to behold! And then God created a woman out of the side of the man. This event was perhaps even more startling because angels had never seen a female before. Eve must have been very beautiful. Later, when Adam and Eve had children, both sons and daughters, the human race began to multiply.

Without particularly endorsing their methodology, God allowed the spirit beings, the angels, to materialize and come down here to try to lift man out of the mess that resulted from Adam’s disobedience to God. Evil was predominating and beginning to generate in the human family, causing a deterioration in morals, character, and so forth. Seeing the interest and the empathy of the holy angels for the human race, which was now in a sick condition, God allowed them to see what they could do. Pastor Russell enlightened us with this fact and opened the door to an entirely new concept of what happened in the First World; namely, spirit beings were allowed to see what they could do to lift the human race out of their cesspool of degradation. However, the angels were unsuccessful. Then Satan became the god of the Second World (2 Cor. 4:4).

As time went on in the First Dispensation, that is, before the Flood, and the angels observed the human family and saw women and children, they began to realize that they, as spirit beings, were only males. The whole spirit realm is described as the “sons of God,” and as far as we know, the female generated down here on the human plane was unique. The angels also observed human males and females having familiar relations, one with the other, in connection with bringing forth offspring. This observation fascinated the angels, and in time, it began to divide their sentiments. Some of the angels now started to entertain unwarranted meditations

and began to reason among themselves. Not only was the human family made in the likeness of their Creator, although in a physical sense down here, but the angels observed a comparison with their own being. The angelic host noticed that they, too, had organs of reproduction, whereas previously they had known only that these appendages were used to eliminate liquid waste from their bodies. Just as humans down here have to eat and drink and also excrete the poisons of their bodies in two processes (in both liquid and solid form), so spirit beings, we reason, have to do the same thing. Angels eat food and have a diet to sustain their life. A proof text is Psalm 78:25, which speaks of “angels’ food.” Since angels do not have life within themselves, they have to eat, drink, and sleep (John 5:26).

As some of the angels reasoned on the fact they have organs exactly like the human males, and as they observed the bizarre and evil behavior of the degenerated portion of the Adamic race that was not of the Noachic seed, their own passions were inflamed. The thought came to them that their organs could be used for reproductive purposes, and so they took unto themselves wives of all they desired (Gen. 6:2). Being of such a superior nature, these angels could do whatever they wanted. In the meantime, God did not interfere with their actions. In the beginning, the angels knew with their conscience that this activity was unauthorized, but little by little, following Satan’s lead, they felt they could have relations with human females with impunity. Thus this element among the angels delighted in their evil passions and brought them to a fruition; they went astray and left their first estate, choosing to remain down here rather than to return to their heavenly abode (Jude 6). This new experience so thrilled and enamored them that they persisted in it. We can see how excruciating and severe this test was on the *holy angels*, who maintained their virginity and integrity. The Scriptures henceforth speak of these holy angels as having passed the test—they will not die.

The sixth chapter of Genesis tells that when these angelic beings took unto themselves wives down here, they brought forth children, who became giants in the earth called *nephilim* (Gen. 6:4). To repeat, the progeny of the holy angels were mighty men of renown, *nephilim*. When the Flood came, it did not destroy the disobedient angels because they could dematerialize and return to spirit nature. The only thing is that they could not return to heaven, for they were incarcerated in *tartaroo*, that is, between the upper and nether realms, as it were. Hence they were not allowed to go back, with their degrading habits, to God’s abode. God’s will is done in heaven now and was done back there; God’s will was never violated in His holy heaven.

However, the Flood did destroy *all* of the *nephilim* offspring completely. Now a problem arises. The question is, If the progeny of the fallen angels were all wiped out at the Flood, why does Deuteronomy hint and use expressions to suggest that the “giants” in the days of Moses were somehow related to the *nephilim*? There has to be an explanation for the reality that there was a connection between the giants after the Flood and the *nephilim*. The Bible assures us that Noah and his male progeny (his three sons) were not contaminated with angelic seed but were separate from all others. But what about the wives? We believe that Noah’s wife was faithful, as well as the wives of Shem and Japheth. Therefore, Ham’s wife is suspect.

The Pastor felt that the *nephilim* race could not generate their own children. He considered them to be sterile like the mule, incapable of producing a second generation of their own progeny. Although this general concept has prevailed, we do not think it is necessarily true because science now shows that with regard to genetics, scientists can take two women and alter the genes of the one so that in the test tube, as it were, there is the potentiality of not even needing a male to reproduce. The science of genetics would like to prosper that goal.

We believe Satan is still trying to do what he originally intended when he deflected—he wanted to bring forth a mixed (or hybrid) race that could not die. Being a genius in his own thinking, Satan realized the potentiality. We do not think that a mixture of angelic and human beings can

be compared with the mixture of a horse and a mule. True, the Bible does state that any mixing of species would normally become sterile, but the angelic and the human are not a proper comparison. We will try to show that there is an implication along this line.

When the angels materialized down here and took unto themselves wives, they did bring forth seed. In other words, the angels in heaven had these organs not only of elimination but also of generation. When God created the angels, they had that ability, but being all males, they did not know about that ability. Thus there was no thought of regeneration prior to the creation of human beings. For angels to have illegitimate children means that in their creation, God gave them, without their cognizance, the ability to reproduce. To repeat, angels could not have had children when they materialized and were familiar with the daughters of men unless God had created them with this ability. The situation became a great test on the holy angels, who kept their virginity of thought, mind, action, and deed. Questions arose: Why did God allow angels to take human wives and have offspring? Why didn't God stop the disobedience?

Satan was self-deceived through the serpent. When he saw that the serpent was wiser than all of the other "cattle" created down here, he thought it had obtained wisdom by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. The serpent ate of that fruit with immunity; it did not die. However, God had created the serpent to be wise, that is, *without its having to eat of that fruit* (Gen. 3:1).

The fallen angels were also self-deceived, whereas the holy angels maintained their integrity by reasoning along the following line. "Since God is the Creator, we want to do His will, and we do not want to wander into unauthorized paths in questioning Him and doing our own thing." The holy angels had innate reverence and respect for the Creator, even though they could not understand why He did not destroy Satan and the other fallen angels. The holy angels *did not question* whether God had the ability to destroy the disobedient angels. Rather, they knew instinctively that He *had a reason* for allowing the disobedience. Similarly, Abraham did not question God when he was asked to slay his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to unquestioningly obey this extraordinary request because he had innate faith in the Creator. He would have reasoned, "Since it was the wonderful Supreme Deity, the Creator, who made this request, He has a good reason for doing so." Abraham would also have reasoned, "If God wants to raise Isaac back to life again, He certainly can do that." Not only did Abraham not act against his own will, but he got up very early in the morning to go on the journey to slay Isaac as a sacrifice. God uses the same underlying methodology to test the angels, Abraham, and us. He has allowed certain things to happen in the true Church and to the truly consecrated to see if we obediently wait for His answer.

Another question needs to be addressed. In the case of the Anakims, Emims, etc., on the far side of the Jordan River, why did God instruct that every man, woman, and child was to be exterminated? The purpose was to rid the human race of this genetic irregularity that developed after the Flood and entered the human family. Although the progeny passed through the Flood, this particular genetic factor was exterminated during the lifetime of Moses. When Og and his people were destroyed in the land of the giants way up to the north, that race was completely eliminated east of the Jordan River.

The Pastor reasoned correctly that as new creatures, we are to ruthlessly destroy the spiritual *nephilim* in our own character, purging out from our inner beings all these workings of the old nature. The Apostle Paul mentioned that we fight "not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). If we root out these giants to the extent that we can—if that is our real intent—God will supplement the balance and bring us forth to victory. On the other hand, if we allow little acts of disobedience, they will multiply and grow and take over the new creature. However, this spiritual lesson, although vital to the new creature, is

secondary. The primary lesson is literal, and the literal application gives a reason for the extermination of these peoples without any thought of mercy. Even babies and children had to be killed in order to eliminate the genetic illegitimate mixture that continued after the Flood. In His own way, God slowly accomplished the elimination.

A climate of doubt is beneficial if we are properly exercised, for faith grows in opposition to an atmosphere of doubt. If not confronted by doubt, we would have no exercise of trying to do what God wants us to do and of developing spiritual muscles of character development. To one class, doubt becomes a stepping-stone because faith surmounts that doubt. However, to another class, doubt causes their downfall because they do not have the necessary depth of consecration. Thus doubt has a separating influence.

Not understanding the reasoning behind the slaughter of all men, women, and children at times in the Old Testament, the world and even many professed and true Christians have much more affection for Jesus than for God. They think more highly of Jesus than of Jehovah because of the gospel of mercy in the New Testament, and they find fault with the Law. Of course it is true that the Law will kill us if we try to justify ourselves by its deeds. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is one of mercy and forgiveness, prevails in the Gospel Age for those who are properly motivated now, and to a certain extent, it will apply in the Kingdom Age. At that time, mankind will be judged according to their works, according to the deeds of the flesh; however, mercy will be given from the standpoint that when mankind is awakened from the tomb, they will have to unlearn and rid themselves of sinful habits that are almost like a part of their being. Therefore, a merciful arrangement has been provided for mankind to be under the tutelage of The Christ in the Kingdom Age, primarily of Jesus as the Head, the Messiah. At that time, the Father will not deal with the human race in the personalized sense that He deals with us now. Instead the Son will do the administration. However, mercy will cease to exist for those who enter into the age beyond the Kingdom. Our first reaction to this statement might be to disagree, but the reason for the permission of evil is to demonstrate to mankind not only that sin is infectious and very dangerous but also that it has been permitted for a short time down here on earth as an everlasting lesson to all future beings, who are yet to be created.

In the future, after the Kingdom Age, there will be no more mercy. Any individual who then sins will die right away. No longer will God wink the eye in the toleration of sin. He has designed an everlasting lesson through the experiences with sin here on earth, the first planet where He made physical, human beings. Eventually human beings, yet to be brought forth, will occupy other planets of the universe. Therefore, technically speaking, the Law of Moses is superior to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If it were not for the gospel of Jesus and his dying on the Cross for mankind, we would have no hope, for the Law would kill us. However, that fact does not mean the Law is not perfect. The Law is *of God*. God instituted the giving of the commandments, etc., and the Law will prevail forever. After the Kingdom Age is complete, His Law will take over, and it will be the standard for those who enter the ages of ages. God's Law will also be the everlasting standard for every created being who ever enters life in any other abode in the physical universe. No more will there be the gospel of grace and peace. Actually, then, the Father's Law is supreme and perfect, whereas the gospel of Jesus Christ, arranged by God Himself as a secondary factor, is meant to be only temporary. At the same time, we should keep in mind that God's attributes are Love as well as Justice, Wisdom, and Power.

To those who are not called in the present life, it may seem that God lacks mercy, but the Bible shows otherwise. A wonderful blessing is that we were born with at least some natural faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Although not necessarily cognizant of the fact prior to consecration, all who have been called did have some natural faith. If obediently followed with conscience, natural faith eventually leads to repentance and salvation for those who are called. God could have sent the gospel eastward to other peoples, but He

chose the Western Hemisphere, generally speaking, for the selection of the Bride class in the Gospel Age. We were blessed in having a kernel of natural faith in our inner being when we were born. Listening to and being motivated by our Creator, and considering that He is superior to us, have had a stabilizing effect on us that we should ever keep in mind. Not only do the heavens declare the glory of God, but our conscience approves of the moral law, and how wonderful it is!

Unfortunately, we, as brethren, are inclined to disparage the Law. Many have never read it in its entirety. Daily, day and night, the Psalmist David thought on the principles of God's Law (Psa. 1:2; 40:8; 119:16,24,35,47,77,174). He benefited from studying the universe and nature with a different perspective than that of his son Solomon. Although David was not eligible for the high calling, he was a man after God's own heart in spite of the flesh (1 Sam. 13:14; 1 Kings 14:8). Having been born in sin and shapen in iniquity, just like us, he was hampered by the flesh (Psa. 51:5). We should be very thankful that we were born after Christ and in the United States of America, for these factors have been helpful in our being led by the Spirit of God into the consecrated state.

In summary, the test has been, Why is God so patient? Truly, He is the God of all patience (Rom. 15:5). Even now He has had long patience in waiting for the last members of the Little Flock. We are nearly 100 years past 1914, and the Church is not yet complete. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7). God has long patience even for the gleaning work of the last members of the body of Christ. He wants the Very Elect to be a tried and true people, whom He can implicitly and everlastingly trust with the divine nature.

### The Rephaim

**Q:** What is the relationship of the Rephaim and the Anakims (Deut. 1:28; 2:10,11,21; 9:2)? How do the later accounts in Joshua fit in since they talk about the sons of the Anakims being still alive at that time? Does Deuteronomy 3:11,13 indicate that the last of the Rephaim were destroyed? The verses in Joshua read as follows:

"And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward." (Josh. 15:8)

"And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites, and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee." (Josh. 17:15)

"And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel." (Josh. 18:16)

**A:** No, the third chapter of Deuteronomy does not indicate that all of the Rephaim (giants) were destroyed. Only those in that location east of the Jordan River were killed. The Rephaim west of Jordan were still living and were encountered by Joshua later. In other words, Rephaim were on *both* sides of the Jordan, that is, in the Gaza Strip, in Israel proper, and in Transjordan.

**Q:** Genesis 6:4 states, "*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the*



sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” Does this Scripture bolster the reasoning that the giants were not limited to Noah’s day but were a continuing problem both pre-Flood and post-Flood?

**A:** Yes, and we can go a little step further. We had previously accepted the Pastor’s explanation that the Flood destroyed all of the giants, but now we would answer the question the way it appeals to us. Genesis 6:4 uses the word *nephilim* for “giants” instead of *Rephaim*. Then in Moses’ day, which was after the Flood, an unusual statement was made in Numbers 13:33. The time setting was when the Israelites were told to enter the Promised Land from the Kadesh-barnea area, but they declined to do so because of the unfavorable report of the ten spies. “And there [in Israel proper] we [the ten spies] saw the *giants* [the *nephilim*], the sons of Anak, which come of the *giants* [the *nephilim*]; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” We know of no other Scripture that closely approximates Numbers 13:33 from the standpoint that an unusual word is mentioned twice in the same verse. God’s Word used the principle of verification by a second or third witness. Accordingly, Numbers 13:33 tells that the sons of Anak were of the *nephilim*, and then the statement is repeated right away. The only other (consecutive) verses that approximate such an important issue are Exodus 12:40,41 about the 430 years that the children of Israel sojourned in Egypt. “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was *four hundred and thirty years*. And it came to pass at the end of the *four hundred and thirty years*, even the *selfsame day* it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” This time period from the covenant with Abraham to the day the Exodus took place was so important that the Holy Spirit saw the necessity to verify it emphatically through *duplication*. Not only was the time period mentioned twice, but it was emphasized with the phrase “even the selfsame day.”

Similarly, the statement about the *nephilim* was repeated. In other words, *nephilim* did come after the Flood, yet a question arises because definite Scriptures say that none of the *nephilim* survived the Flood—period. However, if they all perished, how could they have lived after the Flood? It is important to notice an unusual *silence*; namely, the Bible specifically states that Noah and his three sons were of pure Adamic stock, but nothing is said about the four wives. Not even their names are given, and that fact alone is unusual because in many instances in later genealogy, the wives’ names are mentioned. Therefore, the only possibility for the *nephilim* seed to survive after the Flood would be through the females. Of the four women, we feel instinctively that Noah’s wife must have been pure. In regard to the three sons, Shem was given the most credit of authority, Japheth was next in rank, and Ham, who was listed last, was blacklisted. Thus the intimation is that the *nephilim* seed could only have come through one of the wives, that is, the wife of Ham.

The next thing to note is that Ham had a son named Cush. Cush himself was not black, but his son Nimrod was to be black as a mark of disfavor by God. The lineage of the sons of Cush in the first chapter of 1 Chronicles shows five sons in one verse and then the sixth son, Nimrod, in the next (separate) verse. “And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtecha. And the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan” (1 Chron. 1:9). “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth” (1 Chron. 1:10). An artificial division was purposely made. Much tradition and mythology indicate that Nimrod was black. He wore a leopard skin and had many concubines, but the account is silent about his progeny. In other words, Nimrod had progeny, but they are not mentioned, just as the account is silent about the names of the wives of Noah and his sons. Therefore, the only possibility of the *nephilim* being carried over was through Cush and then Nimrod, who, the Bible states, was a giant and had progeny according to mythology.

The Bible definitely mentions that *nephilim* seed survived after the Flood. Based on Scripture,

we made deductions on this subject about 40 years ago, and since that time, the study of genetics has developed greatly. All of the *nephilim* were destroyed by the Flood, but their seed was inherent in one of the wives of Noah's sons and, in that way, was carried over beyond the Flood. What we are saying here is really only the beginning of the story.

The word *nephilim*, translated "giants," is used only three times in Scripture: once in Gen. 6:4 and twice in Num. 13:33. *Rapha*, the basic word for *Rephaim*, is mentioned 13 times: Deut. 2:11,20 (twice here); 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; 15:8; 17:15; 18:16; and 1 Chron. 20:4,6,8. *Raphah* is used four times: 2 Sam. 21:16,18,20,22. *Rephaim(s)* is mentioned in plurality another eight times: Gen. 14:5; 15:20; 2 Sam. 5:18,22; 23:13; 1 Chron. 11:15; 14:9; and Isa. 17:5. Thus altogether, the basic word for *Rephaim* is mentioned 25 times in the Old Testament.

The word *rapha*, as a noun, is usually defined as "fearful one" or "giant." In the four instances in 2 Samuel 21, the consonant "h" terminates the word: *raphah*. Basically, *rapha* and *raphah* are the same, although there is a slight connotation of difference. The uses of *rapha* in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and 1 Chronicles, which all translate the word as "giant" or "giants" in the King James, pertain to the same *nephilim* seed, even though the names changed. The seed progeny of the *nephilim* who survived were also called "giants."

The term *nephilim* is somewhat synonymous with *Rephaim*, for they have basically the same idea or connotation. The "giants" were given different names in different territories. For example, the Amorites on the west side of Jordan had one name, and the Ammonites, Moabites, and others were given other names, but they were the *same* seed.

*Rephaim*, used in the plural, takes on a slightly different meaning than just "giant," for it has the added meaning of "darkness" or "shades of death." The word is used both as a noun and as a verb, and where it appears, it takes on the shade of meaning based on the context. Basically, then, one of the reasons for *Rephaim* being used is that these are fallen ones. They were sons of light and favor at one time, but through their change of character and disobedience, they became children of darkness. Both fallen angels and their progeny are given that slant. No longer are the fallen angels the sons of God as they formerly were, that is, before their disobedience in the days of Noah.

The foregoing was a long explanation without going into the details of genetics, which, we believe, would support this view. A female can bring forth either a male (son) or a female (daughter). Not only were the children of the fallen angels initially of superior quality and health, but also they were not under condemnation of death. To repeat: No death sentence was inherent in the fallen angels before they materialized, and after they materialized, there was still no sentence of death on them, so their health and superior qualities were passed on to the children, who were all sons. When the fallen angels took unto themselves wives of their own choosing, the offspring were all sons. But now we are talking about the *children* of the sons, the children of the *nephilim*, who were the *Rephaim*, the *Emims*. When women brought forth children of the *Rephaim*, the offspring had in their own chromosomes, in their own genetic genome, as it were, the discrepancy of Adamic stock and *nephilim* seed. Therefore, whatever seed entered the womb—depending on what the womb accepted—could develop into a human child of Adamic origin or a child of *nephilim* origin.

Bro. Russell had startling revelations in certain statements he made, but he did not feel that the offspring of the fallen angels could reproduce. However, even many years ago, before the human genome was studied, we could not accept that thought because of Numbers 13:33. Today the sex of the fetus in the womb can be determined scientifically. The distinction between a male and a female is only one slight difference in the chromosomal material. For want of a better term, we will say that a difference of one atom, or one little unit, determines

the difference between a male and a female.

In regard to this account in Deuteronomy, Moses made sure that during his lifetime, all of the *nephilim* seed was exterminated, but he himself never entered the land of Israel. Therefore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, we are reading only about the experiences of the children of Israel in the wilderness and on the far side of the Dead Sea. When they went northward, God instructed Moses to wipe out every man, woman, and child where this suspect seed would be. However, this extermination did not affect those on the west side of the Jordan River. When Joshua subsequently went into the Promised Land, he started to do the slaying, but the time frame was only six years. Thus the *nephilim* seed after the Flood was not fully exterminated. Many years ago we read a remarkable book entitled *Ages of Chaos*, written by a Jew who was fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, and the Egyptian language. He called attention to the fact that during the days of Saul, the *nephilim* seed was being exterminated, but the king did not finish the matter. Saul was used of the Lord in one of his battles in the south when he was fighting against the Egyptians, but he did not wipe out all of the *nephilim* seed. Then David, who would be the next king, slew Goliath, who, we believe, was of the *nephilim* seed. With the slaying of Goliath, whose hometown was Gath in the Gaza Strip, the *nephilim* seed was narrowed down. On another occasion, later in life, David utterly exterminated the last of the *nephilim* seed, which now no longer exists. The remnants dragged on for years, but the seed was finally wiped out.

Although there is no definitive instruction along these lines, a sufficiency of scriptural information enables us to reason from the known to the unknown because of the limited parameters of these terms. Thus we can come to a reasonable conclusion, which we are trying to explain in our own poor and hurried way. To write a treatise or a book on the subject would involve careful thought that would present the matter much better.

**Q:** Does the Scripture that God visited the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation have a bearing in a natural way because of genetic pollution?

**A:** There is a relationship, but it is not specifically pertinent.

**Q:** The preceding reasoning brings up a right-to-life issue from the standpoint of the Ransom. Obviously, the pre-Flood offspring of the angelic and human female union have no right to a resurrection because Jesus did not die for them, but what about the children of the *nephilim* offspring? Since there was no Adamic continuity through the father because the grandfather was an angel, wouldn't all the children of Ham and his wife be ineligible for a resurrection?

**A:** Only the *nephilim* part would be affected. If we understand the principles of divine government, it would take ten generations for the *nephilim* seed to be released, and certainly those individuals were wiped out within ten generations. None survived.

**Q:** Wouldn't the gene, whether dormant or dominant, be carried on in the offspring of each generation until the dominance was worn off?

**A:** Billions of genes are in the sperm, and only the single sperm that the womb accepts becomes a fetus. And even if the sperm is of the proper origin, the fetus has to come out of the womb and get the breath of life in order to become a viable being that will get a resurrection. Only children of pure Adamic stock who have had the breath of life—be it for an hour, a day, or a month—are guaranteed a resurrection because Jesus died as a ransom for the children of Adam.

**Q:** Certain of Ham's children had to have this *nephilim* gene, whether or not it was dominant, for example, through Cush and Nimrod. Would those who became the Rephaim not be eligible

for a resurrection?

**A:** Carrying the gene and coming to birth are two completely different subjects. Genes have flaws. One does not become a soul until he is born and receives the breath of life. Just *carrying* that gene does not mean the person will not get a resurrection.

**Q:** Wouldn't the individual carrying the *nephilim* gene comprise two different natures?

**A:** No. Diseases and deformities are also carried inherently in the blood, but these have nothing to do with the nature of the fetus until it becomes a soul. Therefore, the right-to-life reasoning is wrong. Many brethren think the fetus has a right to life, but we do not agree. The actual birth with the breath of life must take place first. In considering this subject, we should not go onto the other side of the page and reason backwards. The fetus does not have a right to life. In fact, because of Adam's disobedience, no one has a right to life.

**Q:** Is the following a correct appraisal of what has been said? After the Flood, those in whom the *nephilim* gene was dominant so that they were born as Rephaim are not eligible for a resurrection, but those in whom the gene is recessive so that they retain a normal human appearance are eligible.

**A:** Yes. For example, Cush had five sons who will get a resurrection, but one son, Nimrod, will not.

**Comment:** It is hard to understand that a mother could have two children, one an Anakim and the other a normal human being. The former will not get a resurrection; the latter will.

**Reply:** There is a distinction and a separation.

**Comment:** In regard to the genetic code, one child is Adamic offspring, and the other is illegitimate offspring.

**Q:** With the fallen human race, everyone's genetic code has flaws. Therefore, couldn't the "illegitimate offspring" be just another genetic aberration because of the introduction of the angelic seed prior to the Flood? In the Kingdom Age, genetic aberrations will not occur.

**A:** The very fact God so emphatically instructed that every man, woman, and child was to be destroyed answers the question.

**Comment:** The subject of genetics is very complex—much more so than man realizes at the present time. However, what is understood shows that there is a method by which "giants" could develop. Genesis 6:4 plainly states that there were giants both before and after the Flood. With "giants" being the word *nephilim* in that verse, a definite association crossed over after the Flood.

**Comment:** It is interesting that Young's *Analytical Concordance* says Goliath was "a famous giant of Gath, probably a descendant of the Rephaim."

Now we will return to Deuteronomy 3:8 and discuss that verse and succeeding verses, which were temporarily postponed for an explanation of the Rephaim.

**Deut. 3:8** And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon;

**Deut. 3:9 (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)**

Verses 8-20 can be confusing to one who is not familiar with the geography east of the Jordan River. Selecting certain verses, beginning with verse 8, will help to clarify the meaning.

“And we took ... the land that was on this [east] side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon.” “From the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon” was the full extent of the land, going south to north, that was to be given to the 2 1/2 tribes of Israel. The river Arnon was the northern border of Moab. Starting in the south and going north, the geography was Edom, Moab, and the river Arnon. The land from Arnon up to Mount Hermon became the possession of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. The other details merely describe what part of this parcel each tribe occupied.

Generally speaking, for the sake of brevity and clarity, the northern third of this long parcel of land was given to half the tribe of Manasseh, which occupied not only the land called Bashan to the north but also a large portion of Gilead to the south of Bashan. Therefore, the middle section of Gilead was given to Manasseh, and the rest of Gilead to the south was given to the tribe of Gad. The land south of Gad all the way down to the river Arnon was occupied by the tribe of Reuben.

The previous chapter of Deuteronomy gave the incorrect impression that the Gadites and the Reubenites were scrambled together and that they occupied the bottom two thirds of Gilead. However, the upper part (the middle third) was occupied by the Gadites, and the bottom part (the lower third) was occupied by the Reubenites. Way up to the north was one half of the tribe of Manasseh.

**Deut. 3:10 All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.**

**Deut. 3:11 For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.**

**Q:** What is the thought of Og’s being the only one who “remained of the remnant of giants”?

**A:** Og was the last of the giants on the far (east) side of the Jordan River. The account is silent here with regard to the west side of Jordan.

**Q:** King Og’s bedstead was of iron. Is that detail significant because of his weight? Did his great size require a more substantial bed?

**A:** There were several reasons for the iron bed, one being his stature. Another reason was that iron is better than wood. One problem was that worms infested the wood as it aged. Even in the United States a number of years ago, furniture that was considered very substantial would collapse after 20 or 30 years due to insect infestation. Another problem was the tendency of long pieces of wood to warp. Back there the people did not have mills, where a tree was put on a conveyor belt and cut into planks. Also, it would have been difficult to find wood nine cubits (13 1/2 feet) long. Moreover, on the far side of the river Jordan, most of the lumber was acacia wood, which has been described as being “more crooked than a dog’s hind leg.” Therefore, to get a bed long enough with a single piece of lumber would have been a problem.

**Comment:** With the “cubit of a man” being 18 inches, the dimensions of Og’s bed were 13 1/2 feet long by 6 feet wide. This iron bed was mammoth!

**Reply:** Yes, and the implication is that this king was about 12 feet tall—more than twice the height of a normal man! The expression “cubit of a man” signifies the old-fashioned cubit of 18 inches, which extended from the elbow to the tip of the forefinger (the index finger). Also, a span was 9 inches long, a handbreadth was 4 inches, and a finger breadth was 3 inches—all measurements being based on the human anatomy.

**Deut. 3:12** And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.

Relatively speaking, the land given to Reuben extended from the river Arnon, which was at the middle point of the Dead Sea on the far side of Jordan, northward to the northern end of the Dead Sea. From there, going farther northward, the land was ascribed to Gad. The land divisions for the 2 1/2 tribes are repeated multiple times in chapters 2 and 3.

**Deut. 3:13** And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.

**Deut. 3:14** Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day.

**Comment:** The word “coasts” is translated “border” in the Revised Standard.

**Deut. 3:15** And I gave Gilead unto Machir.

**Deut. 3:16** And unto the Reubenites and unto the Gadites I gave from Gilead even unto the river Arnon half the valley, and the border even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon;

**Deut. 3:17** The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast thereof, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, under Ashdoth-pisgah eastward.

Chinnereth is the Sea of Galilee.

**Deut. 3:18** And I commanded you at that time, saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war.

**Deut. 3:19** But your wives, and your little ones, and your cattle, (for I know that ye have much cattle,) shall abide in your cities which I have given you;

**Deut. 3:20** Until the LORD have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and until they also possess the land which the LORD your God hath given them beyond Jordan: and then shall ye return every man unto his possession, which I have given you.

A spiritual lesson can be drawn from the land division of the 2 1/2 tribes. The land that the Israelites conquered from Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan, was promised to the 2 1/2 tribes on the condition that the men of war of those tribes cross the river Jordan and assist the other 9 1/2 tribes to conquer the land of Canaan.

The 2 1/2 tribes east of the Jordan River represent three classes who will be given a *spiritual*

inheritance. The half tribe of Manasseh pictures the Ancient Worthies, who will get a spiritual resurrection at the end of the Kingdom Age. Gad (“a troop,” hence a great multitude) represents the Great Company, and Reuben (“son of my right hand”) pictures the Little Flock.

The fact the 2 1/2 tribes did not get their inheritance in the full sense of the word until after the Promised Land was conquered has an antitypical lesson. Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh could not return to the land that the Lord had graciously given them, at their request, on the far side of Jordan until the 9 1/2 tribes had taken control of the main land of Israel on the west side of Jordan. In the Kingdom Age, these three spiritual classes will be very busy doing Kingdom work. The Ancient Worthies, as the princes in the earth, will be the representatives of the Church, an invisible spiritual class in heaven. The Great Company will be the messengers between the Church in glory and the Ancient Worthies. As messengers, the Great Company will convey instructions and transmit detailed information to the Ancient Worthies, the governing agents down here on earth. Thus during the Kingdom, the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the Ancient Worthies will be busy—working, working, working—doing Kingdom work, but after the Kingdom Age is over, the Ancient Worthies will be given a spirit nature. In addition, the Little Flock and the Great Company, having a respite from active work, will be given an explanation of God’s intention for the future beyond the Kingdom Age. Such information would not be proper at this time or even during the Kingdom Age because these two classes will be busy with the work at hand. The Little Flock will be made acquainted with God’s purpose for all of the galaxies. Then, their work of the Kingdom Age having been completed, they will be able to more fully enjoy the divine nature with its glory, honor, position, and security. All the foregoing mechanical explanation given here in Deuteronomy beautifully conveys spiritual connotations.

**Q:** In addition to the Pastor’s suggestion that the Rephaim represent character defects the Christian has to overcome, wouldn’t they also suggest fighting against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12)?

**A:** Yes, Christian warfare in the Gospel Age against principalities and unseen powers is pictured by the battles on the east side of Jordan against King Og and King Sihon.

**Q:** Does verse 19 have a spiritual application? The wives, the little ones, and the cattle were left in the cities while the men of war of the 2 1/2 tribes went to fight in the land of Israel.

**A:** From a different perspective, a principle is shown in Hebrews 11:35, “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” In other words, there will be female Ancient Worthies, even though they were not in the forefront with those of the male gender. If we apply this principle to the Gospel Age, the Little Flock will comprise sisters as well as brothers, even though sisters do not have the prerogatives of, say, an elder. Faithful sisters will get a similar reward.

**Q:** Do the men in battle picture the Christian in his own personal battles? Do the left-behind wives, little ones, and cattle represent encumbrances that would not be taken into the battle?

**A:** Yes, that application would be another proper perspective. In other words, the Christian is to forget his “father’s [Adam’s] house” (Psa. 45:10).

**Deut. 3:21** And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.

“At that time” was near the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, after the Israelites had

defeated the two notable kings Sihon and Og. Giants were involved in most instances—much superior forces—but the Lord helped Moses and the people to overcome them. The Israelites were not yet close to the river Jordan, where they would be at the very end of the 40 years, when Moses went up into Mount Nebo. There was a period of time, a few months, in the fortieth year, the last year of the wilderness wanderings, between their victory over the two kings and the crossing of the Jordan River.

As was done to the two kings, “so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou [the Israelites] passest [over Jordan].” Moses was encouraging Joshua that success over the Israelites’ enemies would continue.

**Comment:** In saying in verse 21, “I commanded Joshua at that time,” Moses was hearkening back to Numbers 27, when Jehovah instructed him to anoint Joshua as his replacement. “And he [Moses] laid his hands upon him [Joshua], and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses” (Num. 27:23). The solemnity of the moment struck Moses forcefully, leading to his petition to enter the Promised Land (see verses 23-25).

**Deut. 3:22 Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.**

Although Joshua had great faith, as manifested when he spied out the land 40 years earlier and gave a favorable report along with Caleb, Moses now helped the people to have confidence in Joshua as a leader by publicly encouraging him here. Moses’ comments had a beneficial effect on the Israelites by saying in effect, “God will go with Joshua as He did in the past with me in my ministry.”

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, God helps Christians fight the good fight of faith. We cannot fight in our own strength. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

**Deut. 3:23 And I besought the LORD at that time, saying,**

**Deut. 3:24 O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?**

After the victory over the two kings, Moses besought Jehovah, “O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand.” The greatness of the Red Sea crossing and the many miracles during the 40 years were relatively inanimate forces that confronted the Israelites when the God of nature had to take control. But now, at the end of the 40 years, not only was fighting their enemies in hand-to-hand combat a different experience, but also the enemy peoples were great in number, stature, and physical prowess. The Israelites overcame *mighty* men of valor.

**Deut. 3:25 I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.**

The “goodly mountain” was probably Mount Moriah, where Isaac had been offered. Mount Moriah is also where the capital, Jerusalem, would ultimately be located.

**Comment:** The account is very touching. Moses had just passed his authority over to Joshua and said that God would strengthen him, yet he hoped God would permit him to enter the Promised Land.

**Reply:** Since Jehovah had begun to show His greatness in the defeat of the two kings, Moses



desired a continuum of that same experience.

**Comment:** Moses must have realized that the main purpose of his life was to be God's instrument in leading the Israelites out of Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land, and now he would not get to see the conclusion.

Knowing the Israelites would shortly enter the Promised Land, Moses desired greatly to also enter. Similarly in the Christian life, as one gets older, he is very conscious that the end of his walk is drawing near, and his hope is that he might enter the spiritual Promised Land. The individual thinks about the inheritance, the objective, more than he did earlier in life, when multiple activities and the work at hand took his attention.

**Deut. 3:26** But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

**Comment:** What a wonderful man Moses was! The Heavenly Father spoke to him face to face, as it were.

**Reply:** The personal relationship between Moses and God was very close. When we read through the Book of Numbers and listen to the conversations between them, we see that the Lord condescended to speak on a level of closeness, and because of that close fellowship, Moses said some unusual things. In fact, at times, Moses bordered on being a little too intimate.

We are reminded of the request of Daniel, who received a tremendous amount of information but wanted to know more about the end time. However, he was told to be patient, for no more information would be forthcoming at that time. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book.... Go thy way ... for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4,9).

There are indications in some of the comments made on Mount Sinai that the fellowship between God and Moses was even closer than that with Daniel. Of course the Logos was God's representative in the pillar of the cloud that led the way for the Israelites.

**Comment:** When Moses entreated God on behalf of the Israelites, He hearkened to Moses and did not kill them. Now, at the end of the 40 years, God must have realized that Moses would keep petitioning, so He said plainly, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter."

**Comment:** Paul prayed three times that his eyesight would be healed. The answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

**Reply:** Yes, and Jesus besought the Father three times in prayer in Gethsemane that, if possible, the cup would be removed from him.

**Comment:** Abraham asked God to spare Sodom if there were 50 righteous, 40, 30, 20, or even just 10 (Gen. 18:26-32).

**Reply:** Only four actually left Sodom: Lot, his wife, and his two daughters.

**Deut. 3:27** Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

God told Moses to view the Promised Land in the following order of direction: westward

(directly ahead toward the Mediterranean Sea), northward (to the right), southward (to the left), and eastward (to turn around and look behind him at the land the 2 1/2 tribes would inherit). Thus Moses viewed the land in Israel proper, which the 9 1/2 tribes received, as well as the land the 2 1/2 tribes received. And God stated plainly, “Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.” Spiritually speaking, that is the best we can do on this side of the veil. We see through a glass (or veil) darkly (1 Cor. 13:12; Song 2:9). The river Jordan frequently pictures death, the end of an individual’s Christian walk. From the Christian perspective, the entrance into Canaan represents the entrance into Kingdom glory.

Just as Mount Sinai is a little broader perspective than Mount Horeb, a particular peak, so Mount Nebo is a broader perspective than Pisgah, a particular promontory. Most of the year the view from Mount Pisgah is hazy and thus is obscured, especially in the summer heat. On days when the view is clear, one can see a tremendous distance. The problem with visibility also occurs with Mount Ararat depending on the time of day, the season of the year, and the weather.

**Comment:** The site of Mount Nebo on the northeast corner of the Dead Sea is in the country of Jordan today. The land seen from that vantage point was promised to Israel.

**Reply:** In other words, Transjordan from the northern half of the Dead Sea up to Mount Hermon has been promised ultimately to Israel. Israel’s borders will include Bashan, Gilead, half of Ammon, and half of Moab—from the river Arnon to the foothills of Mount Hermon—on the far side of the Jordan River.

Moses had to die before the children of Israel could enter the Promised Land. In antitype, the Church has to be complete and glorified before the Kingdom starts. The indication, spiritually speaking, is that the last members of the true body of Christ will be given quite an intimate view of the Promised Land while still on this side of the veil. They will see unusual things they were not privileged to see earlier in their Christian walk. In the last days, there will be rather unusual enlightenment as a teaser—not to be compared, of course, with the reality. The effect will be like hearing, “This is the Promised Land, but you cannot enter on this side of the veil, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (see 1 Cor. 15:50). Even the general body of Christ, those who are hoping to be members of the Little Flock, see things that were not revealed earlier in the Gospel Age except to the Apostle Paul, who was translated down the stream of time to possibly even see the heavenly realm in vision.

**Comment:** The following are proof texts that Moses died prior to the Israelites’ entering the Promised Land. “And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days” (Deut. 34:8). “Now after the death of Moses ... the LORD spake unto Joshua ... saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to ... the children of Israel” (Josh. 1:1,2).

**Q:** Acts 7:55,56 records the words of Stephen before he was stoned to death: “But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” In principle, is Stephen’s experience like the experience the feet members will have in receiving an intimate view of the Promised Land prior to their death?

**A:** Yes, Stephen’s personal ending experience is the same in principle. From this reading in Deuteronomy, we extrapolate several lessons, which have to be carefully analyzed so that they are not overly or too distantly viewed, as with either a microscope or a telescope. The lessons can be personal, they can pertain to the body of Christ, or they can have a futuristic application

in the Kingdom Age.

**Deut. 3:28** But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

**Deut. 3:29** So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.

Verse 29 is significant. Moses and the Israelites “abode in the valley over against Beth-peor” for a considerable length of time—perhaps four or six weeks—during which a number of things happened. This period of time gave Moses opportunity to write the Book of Deuteronomy, an enormous task. The Israelites were just about to enter the Promised Land, and then came this delay in journeying of four to six weeks, which must have seemed interminable.

The daughters in Beth-peor tempted the Israelites so that thousands of them perished (Num. 25:3-9). Beth-peor (meaning “house of Peor”) was probably a temple on the hillside near Pisgah but at a lower level. The temple was dedicated to Baal worship of the most obscene type.

And there is another point. Balaam the prophet was slain in connection with the conquest and killing of kings Sihon and Og. Thus not only the giants were put to death but also Balaam. Many ramifications are explained in the Book of Numbers and also later in Deuteronomy.

**Deut. 4:1** Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments.” “Statutes” and “judgments” are mentioned repeatedly in the Scriptures. Even though the translators of the King James were good scholars, it is unfortunate that the actual intonations, or subtle differences, in these words were not too well known or understood. For instance, the Hebrew words *choq* (translated “statutes” here) and *mishpat* (rendered “judgments”) are translated various ways elsewhere in Scripture. The point is that we feel no living scholar (Hebrew or otherwise) knows the intent here. Concordances use the words as synonyms and interchange them. Another problem is that in 1611, different groups of scholars were assigned to the books of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, etc. Each group had a leader, and then another scholar was given the authority to make the final decision on the translation. With this procedure, variances entered the King James translation in spite of the careful screening and supervision, and as a result, the English interpretation is not consistent.

We will try to set forth some ideas or guidelines for understanding the words “statutes” and “judgments.” The “statutes” are the ceremonial account. In Leviticus, for example, laws and instructions were given for certain days, such as the new moon, the Passover, and the first day of the month. Therefore, the thought of “statutes” in verse 1 is “ordinances” and “precepts.”

“Judgments” entail three processes. In a court case without a jury, (1) a judge decides between right and wrong, (2) he determines how the wrong will be handled, and (3) the judgment is carried out. Stated another way, (1) the judge decides if a person is guilty by rendering a verdict, (2) he gives the sentence (an elaboration of how the wrong deed is to be handled), and (3) then comes the execution of the verdict. Thus three primary actions are taken. With regard to the judgment, if a person is wrongly accused and, therefore, is innocent, he is set free. If he is guilty, he is punished or executed. The judge makes the determination.

“Statutes” are something we have been instructed in so that we know what to do and what not to do. For instance, the Ten Commandments are summarized as loving God with all our heart,

mind, soul, and strength and loving our neighbor as ourself. In addition, there are a lot of “Thou shalt nots.” Thus “statutes” are the dos and the don’ts—but what we do is another matter. We fail at times because we lack knowledge or because the flesh is weak, and we suffer accordingly. Thank God, we are not under the Law but under grace.

*Strong’s Concordance* gives multiple definitions for “statutes” and “judgments.” That is proper, for under one circumstance, the Hebrew words have one meaning, and under another circumstance, they have a different meaning. How to apply the Hebrew words in a particular Scripture would depend largely on context and the specific case at hand.

Moses verbalized what the statutes and the judgments were for the Israelites. He said, “I teach [them to] you, for [the intended purpose that if you] ... do [that is, obey] them, ... ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.”

**Deut. 4:2** Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Verse 2 reminds us of Revelation 22:18,19, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” There the judgment for adding to or diminishing the Word of God is given, the penalty for taking away, or subtracting, being more severe.

Here the word “commandments” refers to the moral instruction or law of God to His people, in contradistinction to the ceremonial law. Both are important, but of the two, the moral law is the most important. The ceremonial law is meaningless unless it is done in the proper spirit.

**Deut. 4:3** Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

Baal-peor was a foreign god of a very lewd type of worship. The Moabite women, who worshipped Baal-peor, seduced many thousands of the Israelite men into illicit relationships, leading them even into false religious practices. For this gross sin to occur indicates that when the Israelites came to this vicinity, they remained there for a considerable period of time. They were down on the plain not far from the river Jordan, and on a nearby hill, there no doubt was a temple to Baal-peor. The temple worship fostered lewdness, sexuality, and lasciviousness, and the Israelite men went whoring after this god with the pleasures of the flesh.

Balaam the prophet was responsible for privately instructing King Balak how to bring a curse on Israel. He told Balak to have the daughters of Moab seduce the Israelite men. As a result, 24,000 Israelites died (Num. 25:1-9).

**Q:** Revelation 2:14 talks about the “doctrine of Balaam.” Since that doctrine led the Israelites to commit fornication, does the Revelation text refer to the harlotry of the false Church?

**A:** That is one form of harlotry. Another form, individually speaking, is improper divorce and remarriage, which Jesus called “adultery” (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Remarriage is fornication *unless* one has scriptural justification for a divorce and, consequently, the freedom to remarry. If it is known (not just imagined) that a husband or wife has committed adultery, there is justification to file for divorce, and the innocent party is free to remarry. The ecclesia where this problem

occurs should handle the matter. Otherwise, brethren would be kept busy for the rest of their Christian career with various cases. The primary responsibility is on the home ecclesia to act.

**Comment:** Numbers 31:15-17 reads, “And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.”

**Reply:** This incident reveals one of the ways that Satan operates. Perhaps the most successful of all his temptations is to work through the flesh.

**Deut. 4:4** But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.

The Israelites who felt the consolation of verse 4 had *faithfully resisted* that temptation. Of course many of the Israelites were not tempted; for instance, the Israelite women were not tempted by the Moabite women.

**Deut. 4:5** Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

**Comment:** Moses faithfully did what God had commanded him to do.

**Reply:** We are only in the beginning of Moses’ two discourses to the children of Israel, which he gave without notes. In the two speeches, he discussed numerous subjects of the past. Not only did God give Moses the ability to memorize all that He had spoken, but also Moses had the ability to put the words in writing. In fact, one reason the Israelites remained about a month in this vicinity before crossing the Jordan River was to give Moses time to complete the scroll to give to Joshua. (The scroll was put on the side of the Ark of the Covenant.) For Moses to write down all the words with the means available at that time was an exhausting work. Incidentally, although Moses wrote the great bulk of Deuteronomy, it is obvious from the nature of the comments that certain parts were added later by Ezra, and Joshua may also have inserted a few tie-ins. However, basically speaking, Moses wrote 90 percent of the Book of Deuteronomy by hand under very hard circumstances. What he was able to accomplish is astounding! For example, consider his physical strength to run up and down Mount Sinai several times, and he twice went without food for 40 days and 40 nights. Moses was a most remarkable man, yet he was the meekest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3). For a man with such capabilities to be so meek is outstanding.

**Deut. 4:6** Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

By extension, we can see the wonderful influence the Bible has had on the various nations in the Western Hemisphere. The gospel, the Word, went westward and has been a blessing to all the nations through which it passed. Finally, the last messenger, Charles Russell, was here in the United States.

“Surely this great nation [Israel] is a wise and understanding people.” This statement is evidenced in the number of Nobel Prize winners who are Jewish. The tiny nation of Israel has the greatest representation among the elite scholars, doctors, scientists, etc., of the world.

**Comment:** God set apart Israel as a unique nation, not only morally and spiritually but also as His elect people.

**Reply:** This setting apart can be visually seen in the incident where the Logos, representing God, appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The fact that the bush did not perish shows the keeping power of God, which is another aspect.

**Deut. 4:7** For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

**Comment:** The Biblical Israel was a true theocracy. The nation was ruled and led by God.

**Reply:** Yes, as Moses said, “The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). God dealt directly with the people through His spokesperson Moses. Unfortunately, some brethren have minimized from the platform the instruction of the Law, whereas the Law is actually superior to the Grace Covenant, for in a new form, it will be what God requires of all His people both in the Kingdom and in all ages beyond. There will be no more grace after the end of the Kingdom Age. From that time forward, anyone who sins will receive no forgiveness or mercy because enough knowledge and instruction will have been given to mankind and future generations for them to be entirely responsible for life or death. God’s Law is *His thinking* on all subjects. The Gospel Age is an exception, a very unusual circumstance, that will not apply in the future.

**Deut. 4:8** And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

**Comment:** Having a codified law set Israel apart from the other nations.

**Reply:** Yes, and that law was “so righteous.”

**Deut. 4:9** Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;

**Comment:** Psalm 78:10,11 reads, “They [the Israelites] kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shown them.”

**Reply:** Yes, they forgot in spite of this instruction in Deuteronomy.

**Comment:** Israel had responded at the time of the giving of the Law Covenant, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (Exod. 19:8; 24:3,7).

**Reply:** Yes, the Israelites made a commitment as a nation. When the Bible tells that God delighted in the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings, the reference is to the younger generation, not to those who perished.

**Comment:** Moses specially emphasized “the things which thine eyes have seen.” Nothing more could be done when the Israelites actually saw the Lord’s hand in all their happenings.

**Reply:** Yes, the people were without excuse, but it is amazing how we, too, can forget, even from a natural standpoint, unless we meditate on and allow this lesson to be absorbed so that it will have the intended effect. As Christians, we need to pay strict attention to God’s Word and instruction.

It seems unbelievable that *the very next day* after the destruction of Dathan and Abiram, when the earth swallowed them up, the people blamed Moses for killing “the people of the LORD.” The incident shows that even in the Kingdom Age, the people will need to observe and meditate and reflect deeply upon the instruction they are given because many individuals will be destroyed at that time too (Num. 16:1-41).

**Deut. 4:10** Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

**Comment:** In Exodus 19:10-15, God told Moses to gather the people together.

On almost all occasions, God spoke through the Logos, but what we believe is astounding in this case at Horeb (Mount Sinai) is that God Himself spoke. A close analysis of several statements on this subject seems to indicate that Jehovah actually spoke, although the people saw no similitude of Him (Deut. 4:15,16). The movement they saw in the cloud and the fire represented Jehovah’s coming down. They heard a voice but did not see any distinct form. In the New Testament, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus and three apostles heard God’s voice from heaven say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (2 Pet. 1:17). It would have been awesome to hear and to realize that there was this relatively close affiliation between the Creator of heaven and earth and Jesus, and it is rather touching that the great Creator condescended to come down and communicate to these little human creatures on this tiny, insignificant planet.

**Deut. 4:11** And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

**Comment:** The burning mountain is mentioned in Hebrews 12:18, “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.” It is also referred to in Exodus 19:18, “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.”

**Reply:** The fire proceeded from the bottom upward, as if the mountain belched from the mouth of the earth.

“Ye came near and stood under the mountain.” On Mount Sinai is a little natural platform from which one can look down on the amphitheater-like Valley of Rahah, where the Israelites encamped. It is likely that Moses spoke to the people from that spot. Since the platform has a sharp edge and is like a pulpit that extends outward, it can be said the people “stood under the mountain.” From that platform, the acoustics are excellent.

**Deut. 4:12** And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

**Comment:** The fact the Israelites heard the voice means, by extension, that although they did not see a form, God does have a shape, a similitude.

**Reply:** Yes, God has hands, eyes, feet, etc., as mentioned “here a little, and there a little” in Scripture (Isa. 28:10).

**Comment:** The expression “the voice of the words” shows that the voice had purpose and

words that the people could understand.

**Deut. 4:13** And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

God literally wrote the Ten Commandments upon the two tables of stone.

**Deut. 4:14** And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

**Comment:** “Statutes and judgments” are mentioned repeatedly in this chapter: verses 1, 5, 8, 14, and 45.

**Reply:** The Book of Deuteronomy contains a lot of repetition. Moses’ discourses were not structured such as the Book of Hebrews, which Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God allowed Moses to speak in an emotional fashion. We believe the intonation of his voice manifested his feelings as he tried to impress the lessons upon the people, for he knew they would disobey. He wanted to faithfully discharge his responsibility so that his ministry would be without fault. Moses spoke in an extemporaneous fashion, yet his words are Scripture. Having many parts, his discourses were not structured in the normal way. Ezra, and possibly Joshua, inserted comments to tie together some of the parts.

**Comment:** God commanded Moses to teach the statutes and judgments to the people *before* they entered the Promised Land.

**Reply:** That is true for several reasons. First, the Israelites would not have Moses when they entered the land. Second, while Joshua was the leader, the people had to engage in six years of fighting, and under that condition, they could not receive instruction in a congregational fashion. Thus, when the Israelites came to a relatively peaceful situation, it was important for them to be able to recall what they had previously been taught. If they had not seriously committed the instruction to memory, they would be careless and lack the proper reverence for the statutes and judgments of God.

**Deut. 4:15** Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

**Comment:** Verse 15 indirectly indicates, “Do not think for a moment that you are not being watched.”

**Reply:** In Egypt, there were “pictures” of a multitude of visible false gods. The Egyptians needed something visual to pray before and make offerings to. They wanted a visible object just like the Catholic Church down through the Gospel Age with all kinds of statues of Mary, Joseph, angels, etc. To the contrary, the Christian has a picture in his heart and mind. Instead of something visible, the “picture” should be in the memory bank of the mind and heart.

**Comment:** In regard to not seeing God’s form, the word “similitude” is mentioned twice, once in verse 12 and again in verse 15, to prepare the people for the instruction not to make a graven image, a similitude, of anything on this earth to worship.

**Comment:** In verses 15-19, Moses was amplifying the first two commandments: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the



LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exod. 20:3-5).

After a century or so, the Israelites began to do the very things they were commanded not to do here in Deuteronomy. They worshipped the sun, the moon, Molech, Ashtoreth, and all kinds of similitudes. From time to time, the Lord woke them up with a shock treatment. Momentarily they repented and reformed, but lo and behold, after a few years, they were back in the same rut of disobedience. However, it is startling that ever since the 70-year period of desolation of the land and captivity in Babylon from 606 to 536 BC, the Jewish nation has not made graven images. The lesson finally sunk in and sobered them when Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple were destroyed and the experience of desolation occurred.

**Comment:** Some examples of disobedience with graven images are the following. Aaron made a golden calf, which the people worshipped when Moses was in the mount receiving the Ten Commandments. Jeroboam made golden calves at Dan and Beth-el to rival the worship at Jerusalem. King Ahab adopted a foreign god when he married Jezebel.

**Reply:** Jezebel introduced forms of Baal worship under different configurations. Jeroboam was equally destructive with regard to the ten-tribe kingdom. With the Kaaba at Mecca, the counterfeit representation of the Tabernacle, the custom is to kiss the right rear pillar, or post, as the Muslims face the black box. And much earlier, the custom in the worship of the golden calves at Dan and Beth-el was that when an individual paid his devotions, he kissed the behind of the calf. In fact, that practice is the derivation of the statement still used today “Kiss my behind.” A number of other slang statements in current use in English jargon have unwittingly come down from the past, a few in the favorable sense and most in a derogatory sense.

**Deut. 4:16** Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

**Deut. 4:17** The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

**Deut. 4:18** The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

A “graven image” is a carved image in the likeness of any male or female figure, any beast, any winged fowl, anything that creeps on the ground, or any fish. Egypt was divided into many provinces, and each province selected a particular animal to worship—a crocodile, a hippopotamus, a bull, or whatever. The people seemed to delight in that personal, provincial custom, which helped to identify them when they traveled. In other words, through the animal that was worshipped, they could easily recognize a fellow traveler from the same place. A correspondency is the Masons, who have a secret type of handshake and phrase. Such secret customs and peculiar demonstrations of identification and communication proliferated throughout the various nations. Even in hostile environments, people found a rapport with those who were of a kindred mind.

**Comment:** The fact Moses included both male and female in the prohibition is an indictment of the Catholic Church with all of its statuary. The instruction went beyond just animals.

“The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground.” What depravity for humanity to worship an insect! For example, the scarab beetle was worshipped in Egypt, supposedly being the symbol of resurrection because of a certain habit the insect has.

**Comment:** Worship of the serpent, which “creepeth on the ground,” was common in the Egyptian religion. A serpent on the headdress of the Pharaohs was related to Satan.

**Reply:** Yes, the serpent, a symbol of Satan, was supposed to be a symbol of wisdom. Jesus said to his followers, “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and [but] harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). For example, the Lord’s people should not be so guileless that they get into a situation of evil communication of one form or another when they could easily avoid it by just walking in a different direction.

**Comment:** We have little information about the appearance of the serpent before the Fall.

**Reply:** Originally, the serpent had legs, and probably the two front legs were used like hands to pluck fruit from the forbidden tree. Pictures of the serpent that are thousands of years old did not just come out of thin air.

Israel was guilty of making graven images in spite of this explicit instruction from the Lord through the Logos and then Moses. Christians have used the fish not as an idol or object of worship but to indicate a place of Christian interest and reverence. In other words, the fish was like a secret code. Probably the origin of the fish in Christianity was Jesus’ statement that he would make his disciples “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Christians in the Dark Ages needed a secret method of communication lest the authorities hunt them and put them to death. There were some severe periods of persecution.

**Comment:** Cardinals’ hats are “fish” hats.

**Reply:** Yes, the open mouth of the fish is designed into the top of the hats. The people of Nineveh worshipped Dagon, the fish god, who was also the god of the Philistines. Because of this type of worship, those in Nineveh hearkened to Jonah.

**Deut. 4:19** And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Nor were the Israelites to worship celestial bodies. The heavens have had a profound influence on many nations, and until the 70-year Babylonian captivity, such worship cropped up in Israel from time to time.

**Comment:** King Josiah stopped the worship of the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven (2 Kings 23:5).

**Reply:** Yes, he did a cleaning-out work that had a good effect.

“God hath divided [the celestial bodies] unto all nations under the whole heaven.” The signs of the zodiac rotate very, very slowly, requiring 25,000 years for a complete rotation. Some parts of the zodiac can be seen only in the Southern Hemisphere, and other parts in the Northern Hemisphere. Some nations worshipped the particular sign they dwelled under. Thus national astrology, as well as personal astrology, has had adherents.

**Deut. 4:20** But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

In 1 Kings 8:51, Egypt is likened to an iron furnace, which is a picture of persecution, trial, and hardship. “Iron” indicates an unyielding condition.

**Deut. 4:21** Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:

**Deut. 4:22** But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

Moses had to die—he could not enter “that good land”—because he had smitten the rock the second time in his *own* strength instead of in God’s name only. Although the smiting is a symbol of Second Death, the act does not detract from Moses’ character in the final analysis, for he “was faithful in all his house” (Heb. 3:2). Nevertheless, he did technically commit a sin through human weakness.

“Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your [the Israelites’] sakes.” In smiting the rock twice, Moses was a type of the Second Death class. In other words, his little fit of temper was partially judged by God to make a type of smiting Christ the second time. Although Moses was an imperfect human being, he was 100 percent for God, and he was judged a faithful Ancient Worthy; it was just that his flesh could not perfectly conform. God used that one act of disobedience not only as a type but also as a lesson that one should pay strict attention to and reverence and obey Him because He is a consuming fire—and eventually He expects perfect obedience from perfect human beings and will not tolerate any mistakes. After the Kingdom Age is complete and the saved world of mankind enters the ages of ages, there will be no more mercy. Any act of disobedience will be promptly dealt with. These pictures show what God ultimately expects of all His creatures. When future generations on other planets look down here on planet Earth and see what happened in the past, they will understand very graphically that perfect obedience is to be expected and the least infraction will be dealt with summarily.

**Comment:** Psalm 106:32,33 gives a balanced account of the incident where Moses struck the rock twice. “They [the Israelites] angered him [Moses] also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.”

**Reply:** How thankful we are that God does not deal with our mistakes the same way!

**Comment:** Knowing Moses’ desire, the Heavenly Father instructed him to go to the top of Mount Pisgah, and there this faithful servant was given a beautiful view of the Promised Land.

With few exceptions, the older generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt expired during the 40 years in the wilderness. The Lord was pleased with the younger (or second) generation, who eventually entered the Promised Land. That generation profited by their experiences and by Moses’ instructions.

The purpose of this study of the Book of Deuteronomy is to get an overview and thus to familiarize ourselves with the account. Then, as individuals, we can go back and restudy the book to see other details and jewels of information. Now we are getting a helpful background and seeing the earnestness of Moses and his custodianship. A true mediator between God and the Israelites under the Law Covenant, he handled that responsibility probably better than any other man could have done at that time. In other words, he was the right man for the job, and his whole heart and soul were in this exhortation.

**Deut. 4:23** Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which

**the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.**

**Deut. 4:24 For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.**

Moses again cautioned the Israelites not to worship an image (a *substitution*), for Jehovah is “a jealous God.” His glory as Emperor of the universe will He “not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). The Apostle Paul quoted in Hebrews 12:29, “For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire.”

**Deut. 4:25 When thou shalt beget children, and children’s children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:**

**Deut. 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.**

**Deut. 4:27 And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.**

**Deut. 4:28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.**

Foreknowing (through the Holy Spirit) that the Israelites would disregard the warning, Moses prophesied of their disobedience. In spite of all this admonition, they would, in time, do the very things they were told not to do, and as a result, they would be scattered in foreign lands. Thus Israel’s dispersion was predicted. Here we are reminded of Leviticus 26.

“Ye shall not prolong your days upon it [the land], but shall utterly be destroyed.” To all practical effects—speaking from a broad-brush viewpoint—when the Israelites were taken into Babylonian captivity, they numbered only in the hundreds, being a relative handful. Thus Moses qualified his statement by saying they would be “left few in number among the heathen.” They were “utterly ... destroyed” from the standpoint that Solomon’s Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed and the great bulk of the people (about 98 percent) were slain.

In time, the Israelites worshipped Astoreth, Baal, the sun, the moon, etc. However, as a result of their experiences in Diaspora, subsequent to the Gentiles’ coming into gospel favor, the Jews forsook the worship of false gods, “which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.” The fact this statement is inserted in verse 28 indicates that God can do these things. Moreover, He has a shape (a form) and a voice (John 5:37).

Moses repeated the same warnings over and over. He was not satisfied to just make the statement once but, through repetition, tried to drum the admonitions into the heads of the people. His repetitive exhortative efforts and continual reminders were effective for at least two generations, for when Joshua took over and instructed the Israelites, their obedience was so remarkable that they accomplished extraordinary things. But with the third generation, the Israelites forgot. They mixed in with the Gentile foreign powers and tried to serve not only Jehovah but also other gods.

**Comment:** In Romans 1:22,23, Paul verified what Moses predicted of the Israelites’ history as time passed: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

**Deut. 4:29** But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

**Deut. 4:30** When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

**Deut. 4:31** (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

**Deut. 4:32** For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

**Deut. 4:33** Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

**Deut. 4:34** Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

**Deut. 4:35** Unto thee it was shown, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

**Deut. 4:36** Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

**Deut. 4:37** And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

**Deut. 4:38** To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

**Deut. 4:39** Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Verses 29-39 emphasize the power of Almighty God and how much He did for the Israelites, even going back to creation. God *audibly* spoke to them as a people on Mount Sinai (verses 33 and 36). Whoever heard of such a thing? The Logos was not speaking but *God Himself*. In the incident with the burning bush, the Logos spoke as God's representative and mouthpiece but not in the particular case at Mount Sinai (Exod. 3:2-4; Acts 7:30-35). The LORD God caused the Israelites to actually hear His voice.

“God is a merciful God.” Even when the Israelites disobeyed as a nation, if they turned to God in full sincerity of heart, He heard them, remembering the covenant He had made with them. No other nation has had the experience of Israel with God's deliverance, and He led them in a very tender fashion in the wilderness. In reading of the thunder of His judgments when the Israelites disobeyed, we sometimes overlook the mercy aspect. He watched over them as if they were a little infant, washing, drying, and wrapping them in a blanket, as it were, and bearing them on eagles' wings instead of destroying them for their disobedience (Exod. 19:4). In studying how God dealt with the Israelites in the past, we, as Christians, should not get so

depressed when we have done something amiss that we foolishly conclude God has forsaken us or is not interested in us. God's dealings with Israel are encouraging and uplifting. Seeing His character reflected in His dealings with the children of Israel should intensify our focus of attention and our reverence for Him. If a Christian sins after consecration and sincerely repents, there is retrieval.

“Because he [God] loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt.” The second generation responded favorably, whereas the first generation soon “forgot” (Psa. 106:13).

Verse 30 is a promise regarding the “latter days” (the end of the age) that the faithful Jews (the Holy Remnant) will notice. “When you are in tribulation in the *latter days*, if you turn to me, I, the LORD God, will hear you” (paraphrase).

**Comment:** In all of human history up to this time, Israel was unique in the way God had dealt with them. For example, He spoke to them direct and pulled them out of a mightier nation, yet how would they repay God for His mercy and all that He had done for them? They would serve the wood and stone works of *men's* hands.

**Reply:** It is astounding that even today, with all of the trouble in Israel, the *nation* does not get down on its knees and pray to God. The nation should do what Nineveh did after Jonah's preaching. Even the cattle had to participate in the fasting.

There is something about the condition of hardness of heart—once a person is converted, the condition is more enduring. While no fault is found with a person who is very loving, kind, and sympathetic, it is desirable to have underneath that disposition a diamond or hard-like quality, which the Jewish people seem to have. Even in their blindness, there is a hardness that, when changed, will become of a superior quality like the character of the Apostle Paul. But only God, with His Holy Spirit, can effect such a transformation.

**Comment:** The principle is stated in Luke 7:47 in regard to the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with the hairs of her head: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

**Reply:** That is true. The Pharisees' attitude toward Jesus was, “Don't you know that she is a sinner?” He replied in effect, “The changed love that comes from a person to whom much is forgiven is superior, for that love comes out of the depths of emotion.” The other kind of love is not to be downgraded, but there is a depth, a higher quality, to love that is extracted from the mire of a radical change. A diamond is made from carbon, the softest material, but starting with hard material is very good too. Most of the precious stones are of corundum instead of silicon. A certain study of character is manifest in Scripture and in nature.

**Deut. 4:40** Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Blessings, even health and long life, would be given to the Jews in proportion to their obedience.

**Deut. 4:41** Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

**Deut. 4:42** That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:

**Deut. 4:43** Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

Three cities of refuge were given on each side of the Jordan River, for a total of six cities of refuge out of the 48 Levitical cities (Num. 35:6,7). The three cities east of Jordan are listed, one city in each tribe of Reuben, Gad, and one half of Manasseh. These three cities were spread out, the half tribe of Manasseh being up near the Sea of Galilee. King Og had been in this territory, and Sihon had been to the south near Ammon. In principle, the cities of refuge were for the *innocent*, that is, for those who accidentally killed another. The guilty ones were put to death.

Today in the courts of judgment, the reasons or principles for providing cities of refuge are all being discarded, one by one, by Satan. We can see the corruption that is taking place. Whatever goodness remains is a result of God's dealings with natural and spiritual Israel, but these principles are also being expunged. What we see is not Jesus' tearing down the kingdoms of this world but, to the contrary, Satan's building up his kingdom on the ruins of God's and Christ's moral laws. Satan is still the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

**Deut. 4:44** And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:

**Deut. 4:45** These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt,

**Deut. 4:46** On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt:

**Deut. 4:47** And they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

**Deut. 4:48** From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon,

**Deut. 4:49** And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

The "sea of the plain" is the Dead Sea. Prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Dead Sea did not exist, for Lot chose a well-watered plain. When Sodom was destroyed, the violent earthquake made a huge hole for the Dead Sea and blocked the exit for the Jordan River to Eilat. Not only is the Dead Sea the lowest part of the earth, but the sun is so hot there that the water evaporates rapidly.

The "springs of Pisgah," natural springs that emptied into the Dead Sea, help to identify the location of Pisgah. Spiritually speaking, Christians drink the water of truth from the springs, and with the eye of faith, they view the Promised Land (heaven) from Mount Pisgah.

The whole land of the 2 1/2 tribes east of the Jordan River is given a general description from south to north. Israel west of Jordan is similarly described as being from Dan to Beer-sheba (from north to south). The promised inheritance or boundary east of Jordan extends from the Arnon River and the city on its banks all the way up to Mount Hermon.

Verse 48 mentions "mount Sion," so there were two Mount Zions, one being Mount Hermon on the east side of the Jordan River and the other being near the city of David in the Jerusalem

area. Being exalted and pure with snow, Mount Hermon is likened to heaven, God's throne.

At this time, the Israelites were not too near the Jordan, but nothing was obstructing their route to the river. They had defeated the Amorite kings Og and Sihon and the people, but they remained in this area long enough for Moses to record the sermons he was giving. Thus God had determined that the Israelites should pause and receive instruction before they entered the Promised Land and before Moses handed over the administration to Joshua. Once Joshua took command, action ensued, and there was little time for sermonizing.

**Deut. 5:1** And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

Chapter 5 contains a reiteration of the Ten Commandments. This enumeration, which took place just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, was essentially the same as that in Exodus 20. Following a probable intermission, Moses "called all Israel" to hearken. When it was time to continue the oration, he commanded their attention by calling, "Hear, O Israel"!

**Comment:** We, too, are to "hear" the instructions, principles, doctrines, etc., in Holy Writ so that we may learn, keep, and do them.

**Deut. 5:2** The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

Horeb is more or less synonymous with Mount Sinai. The slight distinction between the two was more noticeable by those who were standing there.

**Deut. 5:3** The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Verse 3 is clearly understood in the Hebrew to mean "the LORD made not this covenant with our fathers *only*, but [also] with us ... who are ... here alive this day." The Law Covenant was originally made with the "fathers," that is, with the older generation, the great majority of whom had perished during the 40 years in the wilderness. Stated another way, Moses was now speaking 40 years later, after half of the nation had perished. Forty years previous, God had spoken from Mount Sinai, and most of those who were now alive to hear Moses' final oration at Beth-peor had no doubt actually witnessed that occasion.

**Comment:** The translators added the word "even." With the omission of that word, Moses was very forceful in commanding the attention of the Israelites. "The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *us*, who are *all of us* here alive *this day!*"

**Q:** Wouldn't "the fathers" refer back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

**A:** That interpretation could be given, but Moses had been speaking so much about the Israelites' experience at Horeb that it seems to make more sense to realize he was talking to the children of parents who had come out of Egypt. Those children survived because they were not of sufficient age to be reckoned culpable for the wrong deeds done by the older generation during the 40 years of wandering. Moses was reiterating the responsibility under the Law Covenant, of which the Israelites had said, "All these things we will do." At that time, they had wanted Moses to speak to them, not the Heavenly Father, lest they perish.

**Deut. 5:4** The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

**Deut. 5:5** (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to show you the word of the



**LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,**

**Deut. 5:6 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.**

Verse 5 is parenthetical, so Moses was saying, “The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, saying, ‘I am the LORD thy God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.’”

The parenthetical portion shows Moses’ role as mediator: “(I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to show you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;).” Even though Moses was the mediator, he properly included himself as the leader of the great nation of Israel by saying the covenant was made “with us” (verse 3). He was chosen to be the mediator, but nevertheless, he was responsible, as well as the rest of the Israelites. His thinking and attitude show he was well chosen by the Heavenly Father for the role he occupied at that time. Similarly, Jesus was God’s choice, and that choice could not have been better.

**Comment:** Exodus 19:9,16 helps us to understand the people’s fear: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.... And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.”

**Reply:** The experience and God’s words were to be seared into the Israelites’ memories. Consider what they experienced. God’s voice was so powerful, fearful, and dreadful that they felt they would literally die if they continued to hear the conversation without cessation. But how short their memories were! In spite of that dramatic appearance, they soon forgot because they did not treasure God’s words in their hearts. Their forgetfulness shows that in the Kingdom Age, even though the knowledge of God will be as the sun sevenfold, people who are not in proper heart harmony will soon forget—especially when the Messiah is *invisible*. The people will see only the earthly representatives of the glorified Church and their Head.

**Deut. 5:7 Thou shalt have none other gods before me.**

Verse 7 is the First Commandment. When Jesus condensed the Ten Commandments into two, he combined the first four for “Love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength” and the last six for “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” The reasonable supposition by many is that on one tablet, or slab of stone, was duty toward God, including honoring the sabbath, and on the other tablet was duty to one’s neighbor.

**Deut. 5:8 Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth:**

**Deut. 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,**

Verse 8 is the Second Commandment. Verses 8 and 9 are omitted in the Roman Catholic faith, and instead the Tenth Commandment is split into two parts to make up the ten.

**Comment:** The Egyptians and other heathen peoples that the Israelites interacted with made

graven images, and the Israelites fell into this idolatrous practice rather quickly.

**Reply:** Yes, both in Egypt and after the decease of Joshua, the Israelites made graven images, but they did this in greater fashion after the Prophet Samuel.

A “graven image” was a carved image (usually a statue), of which there were several kinds. (1) The stone was scored into a concave or a convex image depending on the stylus used and the technique and purpose. (2) A sculptured image was a carved three-dimensional statue. The graven likenesses “of any thing that is in heaven above” were of the sun, moon, and planets. Hebrew, Grecian, and Roman mythology tended to use the bodies in our own solar system rather than the distant stars. However, as time went on, the idolatry became more and more complex and began to include the zodiac.

If read alone, verse 8 does not convey the correct thought. Verse 9 is part of the context, for it is the making of an image and *bowing down to it* that constitutes idolatry. For example, the carved bulls that held up the laver for Solomon’s Temple not only were not disobedience but were sanctioned by the Lord. And graven images of cherubim were on the sanctuary walls both inside and outside the immediate walls of the Holy. The images represented qualities of character and attributes of wisdom, justice, and power. However, when the Jews began to idolize images, that “bowing down” constituted disobedience. This Second Commandment prohibits bowing down to images of saints and of the Virgin Mary and praying to them, as though statues have ears and hear prayers.

God is a jealous God, who visits “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.” The influence of genetics versus environment on a person’s character has been debated over the years. Actually both factors are involved, although one factor can override the other depending on an individual’s heart attitude and actions.

**Q:** Is one reason for the punishment going to the third and fourth generations that the generations can be contemporaries?

**A:** Yes, that is true.

**Deut. 5:10** And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

From a moral standpoint, why was verse 10 included after the first two commandments?

**Comment:** Of the 2 million Jews who were living at this time, “thousands” loved God and kept His commandments.

**Comment:** When verses 9 and 10 are considered together, one lesson is that those who loved God and kept His commandments were spared—even if they were among the iniquitous generation who received punishment. The two verses show the justice and the mercy of God.

**Q:** From another perspective, do verses 9 and 10 establish a principle or precedent that only a remnant is ever really obedient, at least until the Kingdom? That principle would carry forward down the stream of time to the Holy Remnant in the near future.

**A:** Yes, that practical observation is true.

**Deut. 5:11** Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Verse 11 is the Third Commandment. God will not hold guiltless those who take His name in vain. Such individuals are judged in proportion to the circumstance under which they commit this violation.

As Christians, we understand this commandment to mean we should not be hypocrites. The role of being ambassadors for Christ is very honorable. If any foolishness on our part is misconstrued by observers, there is a certain degree of responsibility.

Taking the Lord's name in vain can occur in such a subtle manner that one does not realize it is happening. One example is the common and excessive rote usage of the Lord's name and "God bless you," which takes away from the intended depth of meaning. The old man can be very clever. We should guard against trying to give the impression that we are very religious by always using the Lord's name in a complimentary sense, for that practice could be sowing seeds of pride. It is helpful to take inventory and discard extraneous habits that can lead to more detrimental things. Habits can be caused by either genetics or our environment.

The Decalogue, the moral code of the Law, is worthy of consideration for the Christian, for it is God's will and thinking. The principles of the moral Law are appropriate for all of God's people, whether they are in the world, in the Church, in the Kingdom, or after the Kingdom. God's principles are forever, whereas mercy is not, for mercy will end at the close of the Kingdom Age. Anyone who sins after the Kingdom Age will be dealt with peremptorily, for perfect obedience will then be demanded of perfect creatures. But thank God, He will be merciful in establishing the Kingdom and allowing mankind to walk up the highway of holiness, and we thank Him now for the Grace Covenant, whereby we can serve, please, and communicate with Him and have the extraordinary high calling, which is open to those who pursue it with their whole heart, soul, and being. Mercy was certainly extended in the Jewish Age, for over and over God forgave the Israelites in spite of their serving Molech, for example.

To not take the Lord's name in vain is our endeavor. Each of us knows privately we have thought on or done things, even after consecration, that we want expunged from our soul and being. By God's grace and the Holy Spirit, we are kept from getting too discouraged, and we keep pressing on in the narrow way.

**Deut. 5:12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.**

**Deut. 5:13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:**

Verse 12 is the Fourth Commandment. How carefully Moses enunciated these principles—and without a podium and a typed manuscript! He spoke with the power of the Holy Spirit and his heart. What a tremendous servant of Jehovah he was! He even offered to have the Lord blot him out and kill him rather than the nation. Our hearts are filled with admiration, for he is an exemplar of what we would like to have ingrained into our characters.

How reasonable to work for six days and then have a seventh day for rest and meditation on the Lord! In principle, the Christian does not have to necessarily observe the Jewish sabbath day but one out of every seven days. During the Gospel Age, the Christian follows the culture of the nation he is living in and uses that seventh day as his "sabbath." Each nation has a rest day every seven days even from just a pragmatic standpoint, and the Christian can use that day for doing the Lord's will rather than for recreation.

**Comment:** The provision of manna for six days with a double portion on the sixth day and nothing on the seventh was a practical reminder for those years in the wilderness that the

Israelites were to rest on the sabbath.

**Comment:** Exodus 31:13 states that God gave the sabbath as a sign to Israel so that the people would know, “I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.”

**Reply:** As Christians, we must set aside some time during the week for the Lord. Thus the *principle* applies of keeping a “sabbath.”

**Deut. 5:14** But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

Notice the comprehensiveness of the sabbath rest. It applied to all Israelites, servants, animals, and strangers.

**Deut. 5:15** And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Verses 13-15 are a detailed enumeration of the principle involved in keeping the sabbath. The sabbath not only honored the Lord God of Israel but also, at the same time, worked out for the spiritual good of the nation, for that day was devoted in large part to devotional study or meditation on the commandments of the Lord. In addition, the sabbath had a pragmatic effect in the sense of affording rest to all, including the animals. The *great and mighty* God is of such a *tender* disposition that He had in mind all of His creation.

**Comment:** The fact Moses mentioned the Israelites’ bondage in Egypt must mean they worked seven days a week while in bondage.

**Reply:** Yes, that was the case.

**Deut. 5:16** Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Here is the Fifth Commandment, an instruction with regard to honoring father and mother.

**Q:** If one’s parents are not obeying God’s Word, what should he do?

**A:** The implication is that the individual should still honor his father and his mother. The Apostle Paul’s advice in the New Testament helps to answer the question. He spoke about the attitude a consecrated husband or wife should have toward the consecrated or unconsecrated spouse. He also discussed the attitude of a consecrated master toward his consecrated or unconsecrated slave, and the attitude of a consecrated slave toward his consecrated or unconsecrated master. In all cases, the deference or distinction was to be kept in mind, and the Lord was pleased with a slave who rendered submission. If both master and slave were consecrated, the slave was not to be insurrectional but was to render an honest day’s service.

**Comment:** Under the Law, a son who did not properly honor his parents was put to death.

**Reply:** If the son, even though a minor, cursed his father or his mother, he was to be stoned to death, and the parents were to throw the first stone (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9).

By extrapolation, as one meditates on the requirement for obedience to parents, he realizes that respect goes down the line to the elderly. Similarly, the principle of honoring and keeping the sabbath has many ramifications. In fact, the commandment to honor the sabbath and keep it holy is a terse, overall perspective of the duties of an Israelite to the God of Israel. God later explained further details to Moses predicated on the principles of the Ten Commandments. In other words, the Ten Commandments were purposely brief to serve as reminders of certain principles to ever keep in mind. Then, subsequently, God gave several examples to Moses to show, based on these principles, how to handle various situations.

Of course it is difficult for a child to honor his parents when the parents are inordinate in their demands of respect and they make him do something unreasonable. Nevertheless, the parents were to be obeyed, and in time, the problem would be ironed out, especially when the son or daughter became a parent. Similarly, the Israelites were supposed to learn from their bondage in Egypt what not to do when they were in a position of authority.

**Deut. 5:17 Thou shalt not kill.**

Verse 17 is the Sixth Commandment. The thought of “thou shalt not kill” is “thou shalt not murder.” This commandment applies to sentient beings and not, for example, to killing animals for food or out of mercy to end their suffering. Any reasonable extrapolation of this commandment has to be carefully done.

**Comment:** At times in their history, the Israelites were instructed to kill every man, woman, and child of an enemy. However, these individuals were already so vile and evil because iniquity had reached its fullness that to leave them on the earth would have been a greater evil. The temptations that resulted from the vile actions had to be removed.

**Reply:** Of course God gave the orders, and He had His own good reasons.

Environment influences the genetic strain. A person who lives in an environment for any length of time develops characteristics that even seem to enter the genome of the individual. Given time, inherited genes and environment have a reasonably equal influence on a person. Therefore, people can develop such corrupt habits that even their children and infants have that strain. The giant (*nephilim*) strain in the genome is a good example. In time, even the babes had to be put to death so as not to corrupt the new immigration of Israelites in the land. An opportunity for life will be given in the Kingdom Age. Since the entire human race is under Adamic condemnation and all in Adam die, it is rather immaterial from the standpoint of justice whether an individual lives for a day, a week, or a hundred years. A wonderful blessing is awareness of the fact that the human race will be awakened from the tomb with the later opportunity for complete resurrection.

**Comment:** To realize that this commandment prohibits murder and not killing per se influences a lot of thinking, even among Christians. For example, the obedient will do whatever the Lord instructs. Saul lost the kingdom because he failed to obey the commandment to kill Agag and men, women, and children. With regard to the spurious account in John 7:53–8:11 of the adulterous woman, where Jesus is supposed to have said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,” the reality is that God’s Law required stoning for adultery. To do anything short of that was to go contrary to the Mosaic Law. Therefore, the real intent of the Sixth Commandment pertains to murder, where there is no rightful cause to slay an individual.

**Reply:** Of course that account in John is spurious, for had the incident actually occurred with the scribes and Pharisees bringing a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, he would have been

forced to say she should be put to death. One proof the account never occurred is that if Jesus had said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," his words would have ended all criticism of wrongdoing by the Lord's people or even by the unconsecrated. Another proof the account is spurious is that Jesus is said to have written in the sand with his finger, but he was in the court of the Temple, which had a stone floor.

**Comment:** Because the Israelites did not kill according to God's instruction, the offspring of those enemies have become more and more adversarial down through the generations, the Palestinians being an example.

**Comment:** Every Christian has personal obstacles ("enemies") to overcome, and he is expected to put them to death, spiritually speaking.

**Reply:** From a spiritual standpoint, the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, etc., can be thoughts or suggestions that are ingrained in the new creature, the Christian mind. Such foes must be dealt with sharply and firmly. Christians are to take positive action against sin when it appears and not to parley lest there be compromise.

**Deut. 5:18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.**

Verse 18 is the Seventh Commandment. Notice that fornication, although involved, is not mentioned here because the commandment is given succinctly. God elaborated on every one of the Ten Commandments when He instructed Moses on various types of situations that might arise. In adultery, at least one of the guilty parties is married. This commandment shows that the marriage vow is to be honored.

**Deut. 5:19 Neither shalt thou steal.**

Verse 19 is the Eighth Commandment. There are many ramifications to stealing, for instance, selling fraudulent stock, dishonoring contracts, and issuing counterfeit money. Stealing, which is related to defrauding in one way or another, means taking money, goods, property, honor, esteem, authority, etc., from another person.

Remember, God originally spoke the Ten Commandments with an audible voice so powerful that the people could hardly understand it. In fact, they thought that if He went into detail, they would die. Even the effect of angels who appeared in a somewhat glorified state was to cause humans to fall down. In a couple of instances, Daniel was knocked off his feet and made dumb. But when angels appeared as men, that is, in a more normalized sense, a human could eat and talk with them and be unaware of their status.

Just as succinct commandments are helpful to the memory, so the Lord's Prayer is uttered at times when the mind and emotions are overwhelmed. As a result, the individual is uplifted.

**Deut. 5:20 Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.**

Verse 20 is the Ninth Commandment. While this commandment could be considered part of the preceding commandment [fraud], it was necessary to list this one separately because it can be so easily violated. The great majority of people would not steal, but bearing "false witness" is a sly act that can be done without the perpetrator's realization. Therefore, although bearing false witness really falls under the category of defrauding another person, it merits separate consideration because it is so common.

**Comment:** Evil speaking is included under this commandment not to bear false witness.

**Comment:** A false witness can also be given by shrugging the shoulders or nodding the head or even by silence if a misstatement is made about another. Silence can be understood as consent.

**Reply:** Yes, bearing false witness is commonly done in many different ways. Of course the tongue is involved. When we hear certain statements, we tend to become judgmental, but did we see the act ourselves? Is the information firsthand? As information is passed on, going from mouth to mouth, subsequent versions are usually quite different from the original statement. Then, when we make a judgment, we may be judging the wrong person. Family relationships and friendships also tend to warp what is repeated, with the result that the report is construed to favor the wrong party. Firsthand information is the most desirable. A judge who sits on the bench wants to get down to the root of a matter. Moreover, there are times when both parties are guilty, or in rare instances, both parties could be innocent.

**Deut. 5:21** Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Verse 21 is the Tenth Commandment. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:36-40). The word "neighbour" originated from the Father's vocabulary in the Ten Commandments. Thus we can see how the Son, hearkening to these commandments, used the language of his Father and summarized them in principle. In the encounters between Jesus and those who disputed with him, his replies usually had to be short and concise to meet the situation. Sometimes he wanted to talk on another topic, so he handled the interruptions briefly and then got to the real point he wanted to make.

**Comment:** When Jesus gave an answer, the others were amazed.

**Reply:** Yes. For instance, the Pharisees thought they had Jesus cornered with their question "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" (Matt. 22:15-22). They thought that whatever he answered would cause problems. But how did Jesus respond? "Whose superscription and image are on this coin?" They replied, "Caesar's." Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." The Pharisees were startled by Jesus' reply, especially because they were so convinced he could not answer the question. How well it was said in John 7:46, "Never man spake like this man"!

The Ten Commandments are easy to understand, but their depth is another matter. We need the robe of Christ's righteousness because there are so many subtleties of the depraved human mind. Although consecrated, we still have this treasure in an earthen vessel that was originally born in sin and "shapen in iniquity" (Psa. 51:5). Thank God, a robe of mercy has been given to the gospel Church of this age that enables us not only to be in friendship with God but even to be considered as sons and daughters if we are faithful in intent and the sincerity of our vows.

**Deut. 5:22** These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

Verse 22 gives the circumstance under which God spoke to the nation of Israel in an audible fashion in the initial giving of the Ten Commandments while they were in the valley below, on the Plain of Rahah. Notice all of the detail: fire, a cloud, thick darkness, an awesome voice, and then the writing on two tablets of stone, which were delivered to Moses. Thus there was an earthquake, and God spoke to the Israelites out of darkness, adding to the fact they did not see

any similitude. If the cloud had been white, the people could have imagined all kinds of things such as a face, a lion, or a tree, but darkness prevented their seeing any shapes and emphasized the voice they heard. Great power was seen and felt—for instance, Mount Sinai shook—but no similitude was seen. The backdrop was awesome, yet the Israelites forgot God’s works. Incidentally, the conciseness of the Ten Commandments was suitable for their being written on the two stone tablets.

**Deut. 5:23** And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

**Deut. 5:24** And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.

**Deut. 5:25** Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.

**Deut. 5:26** For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

**Deut. 5:27** Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.

The elders, the heads of the tribes, came near to Moses because the people said they could not stand the fire and God’s glory any longer. Feeling they would be consumed, they pleaded with the elders to speak to Moses. When this scene, which has no doubt been recorded, is played back in the Kingdom, it will bring stunning silence to future created beings.

**Q:** Is this account the same as Psalm 68:8, “The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel”?

**A:** Yes. The event is mentioned several times in the Psalms. Psalm 114:4,6 tells of the echoing effect of the thunder—the reverberations and auxiliary sounds. “The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.... Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?” While the sound started with tremendous, awesome thunder, the next auxiliary sound was like “rams,” and succeeding reverberations, or auxiliary sounds, echoed like little “lambs.” In other words, there was a gentleness in the aftereffects of this great power. We think of the Scripture “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). The great Jehovah, God Almighty, condescends to visit the humble and the contrite of heart. The sound of the thunder was meant to indicate this principle.

Not only was the voice awesome, but the fire above was evidently so large that it seemed to be right next to the host, who stood at attention at the foot of Mount Sinai. The combination was so powerful that the people felt it would consume them. A representative of the people, perhaps Joshua, voiced to Moses the people’s concern about perishing, asking him to go near and hear what God had to say. Then Moses was to inform the people of God’s requirements, and they would keep them. Verse 26 indicates the magnitude of the experience: “Who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?”



**Comment:** “And we will hear it, and do it.” How wonderful that the people, at least at that time, not only were willing to hear their responsibilities but also were pledging to do them!

**Reply:** Many of us, when we individually gave our heart to the Lord, were very much moved to make that consecration. The commitment was a giant step, but keeping the commitment and the fervor and zeal of our first love is very difficult. *Continuing* to do God’s will with zeal and desire will determine whether or not we are of the Very Elect.

**Q:** Did the people feel the great fire would consume them because the voice was getting louder or because the fire was spreading?

**A:** The Bible indicates that God’s voice kept rising in decibels and penetration and that the fire increased in illumination at the same time. In the background, the earth trembled with the rumbling of an earthquake. One account even seems to indicate that lightning flashes were involved with the fire. Thus lightning, thunder, and earthquake rumblings were the backdrop to God’s speaking. Of course His voice overrode the accompanying sounds.

**Comment:** Exodus 20:18,19 reads, “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

**Reply:** How awesome the scene must have been! The people fell back in fear. Their falling back reminds us of Jesus’ apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he manifested his power by causing his apprehenders to fall backward momentarily. Jesus thus demonstrated not only that he had the power to free himself but also that he was willingly submitting to capture and, ultimately, crucifixion.

David was given supernatural understanding to be able to write about the Exodus and the giving of the Law. And what did he say? “O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97).

**Deut. 5:28** And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

God said (through Moses), “They [the people] have well said all that they have spoken.” Sometimes wisdom comes forth out of the mouth of babes, and the words of the people were very appropriate on that occasion. They were saying that they needed a mediator in their dealings with the Almighty God lest they perish.

**Deut. 5:29** O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

The Lord God continued, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all* my commandments *always*”! God’s people, whether Jews back there or Christians now, are to retain and keep before their minds the responsibilities they have as ambassadors of God or Christ before the world.

**Comment:** What pathos God expressed, for He knew the end from the beginning—He knew what lay ahead! We are privileged to be given insight into the sentiments of the great Jehovah.

**Reply:** God’s revealing Himself on different occasions enables us to see that “the high and lofty

One that inhabiteth eternity” has compassion and sympathy for those who are of a lowly and contrite disposition (Isa. 57:15). He has emotions, which we can relate to because of our own emotions. We are dealing with a *living* God in two senses of the word. Not only does He exist, but as Christians, we can feel more personally involved and in touch with that existence.

**Comment:** Psalm 81:10-14 reads, “I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.”

**Reply:** That reference is very appropriate, one tie-in being the expression “Oh.”

**Deut. 5:30** Go say to them, Get you into your tents again.

**Deut. 5:31** But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.

The Israelites were given affirmation that in spite of the previous and subsequent murmurings, God approved of and had chosen Moses as His mouthpiece before them. He told Moses, “I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.” God intended to discuss the details that were involved in keeping the Ten Commandments. With those commandments being only a brief description of His will concerning His people, other ordinances were needed to show how His will affects many avenues of experience in daily living. The people would benefit by having the proper teaching authority call attention to those ordinances: commandments, statutes, and judgments. The “commandments” were like verbal expressions in writing that the people were to obey. “Statutes” were rules or regulations on how they were to conduct themselves for the communal benefit. In other words, there was *personal* as well as *communal* responsibility. “Judgments” were the actions to be taken in the doing of God’s will. The conscience, which is God-given, can be instructed as to right and wrong. Knowledge is *necessary* for one to correctly judge what is right, good, and proper, as well as what is wrong and improper. The Holy Spirit operates on our conscience and helps us to see what is proper. Our God-given instinct of right and wrong is impaired because of Adamic weakness and thus needs instruction and knowledge. The Holy Spirit enlightens, informs, and helps us to discern, and then God searches and examines our will to obey, judging whether we are fit subjects to be given the authority of His high calling in Christ Jesus, namely, to be kings and priests. No wonder it has taken more than 120 years to get the last members!

**Deut. 5:32** Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

“Ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” In trying to do God’s will in cases where it is difficult to make a proper judgment, we usually look for two or three confirming evidences to assure us as to what God’s thought is on a particular matter. However, the devil operates through the old man and gives two or three witnesses as to why we should do the wrong thing. Thus the flesh has its arguments, but we should look to the Lord’s will and ignore the thinking of the flesh. In decision making, the old man gives alternative suggestions for going astray, but we are to see what is good and proper from God’s standpoint.

**Comment:** Hebrews 12:13 instructs, “Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame

be turned out of the way.” We are to go straight ahead and not try to find a way out of direct obedience to God and His principles.

**Reply:** Yes, we are reminded of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. When Pilgrim was on his journey to the Heavenly City, there were numerous bypaths and distractions to surmount. And that is the experience of the Christian. Incidentally, in popularity, that book was next to the Bible in being internationally read, but little has been heard about it in recent decades.

**Comment:** Not turning to the left or to the right is a reminder of Ezekiel 1:12. The four living beings, God’s attributes, “went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not [to the left or to the right] when they went.” As God is holy and His purposes are straightforward and all in alignment, so we want to be in our imperfect way.

**Reply:** Yes, and we are also reminded of the prophet who was told to deliver a message to Jeroboam. The prophet acted properly in going, but on the return trip, he deviated (1 Kings 13:11-26). Instead of coming back direct, as instructed, he listened to an old man, another prophet, who suggested that he stay for a meal before continuing on his journey. To add to the deception, the old man claimed the message was from God.

**Comment:** Isaiah 30:21 reads, “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”

**Reply:** While the Christian can get instruction from that Scripture, the primary setting is the Kingdom Age. At that time, the voice of instruction will be behind, whereas now, of our own volition or self-will, we have to respond to God, the Great Shepherd, who uses Jesus as the Good Shepherd to lead us. Since we are to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, the Gospel Age principle is different from that which will occur in the Kingdom Age. At that time, instruction will be given in a mandatory fashion—the voice will be behind instead of in front, or before.

**Comment:** We are cautioned not to be blown about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). The Heavenly Father is not ambiguous with the commands He gives. It is our natural reasoning assisted by the Adversary, who started way back in the Garden of Eden, that creates a lot of gray areas. And that is what happened with Israel. The Scriptures have few, if any, gray areas.

**Reply:** The mature man of God is “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” and “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16,17). Of course we are responsible for exercising ourselves according to that instruction in order to be *thoroughly* complete. There is sufficiency in the Word of God, so with effort and prayer, we try to discern God’s will. Our senses are dull, but when His will is seen, it is plain and seems so right.

**Deut. 5:33** Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

**Comment:** “Ye shall walk in *all* the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you.” If a person broke one of the commandments, he broke them all, so perfect obedience was required under the Law to get life.

**Reply:** Yes, it took the disobedience of only one commandment to be guilty of the whole Law. It was not that the individual was disobeying the other nine commandments, but that he was disobeying the *intent* of the Ten Commandments. To infract one commandment was infracting the cohesive whole.

It is interesting about the prolonging of days. Of course the Israelites knew it was just a matter of time before a person died. To all appearances, everyone ends up in the tomb. Therefore, God was saying that generally speaking, endeavoring to keep His Law during the Jewish dispensation had the effect of prolonging one's days beyond the normal life span. Even during the Gospel Age, feeding on God's Word seems to give strength to the marrow of the bones. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*" (Prov. 3:5-8). God's Word is health to the flesh. An evidence to that effect is the fact that Moses at the age of 120 years, just before his death, was in the full vigor of life (Deut. 34:7). He did not lack for energy, stamina, and health. Another example is Joshua, who lived to be 110 (Josh. 24:29).

Very few Christians can be like Stephen, who was most unusual, but he was supplanted by a still more unusual person, the Apostle Paul. Stephen died a death of victory in a very short time span of obedience to his commitment to Christ. If we knew that we had made our calling and election sure, we would want to be transformed right away, but because we are not sure our characters are crystallized in proper development, we want to wait a little longer to see if we can do better and thus be made fit for an inheritance of the saints in light. As we press on in the narrow way, we begin to see our faults more and more, and we realize not only how much we need instruction and the robe of Christ's righteousness but that development in Christlikeness takes time. We begin to see the requirements of those who will be the kings and priests of the next age and who will merit worthiness in God's sight to be given immortality. To give immortality is the fullest confidence that God can have in any individual. In summary, God's Word is a blessing, and we are thankful for the opportunity that each day provides for learning His will and, hopefully, for being faithful to our commitment.

**Deut. 6:1** Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

**Deut. 6:2** That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

The term "commandments" suggests the *audible* statements, the Ten Commandments, that God gave to the children of Israel. And there were other occasions in Moses' ministry, as well as under Joshua and others, on which God spoke audibly, at least to the prophet, regarding what was to be done. Already factored into the Law were the ceremonial "statutes" and "judgments," which pertained to selected decisions and examples of how to properly judge, plus the compensating reward for either infracting or obeying those statutes and judgments. An extension of life was promised for obedience. As the Jew endeavored to keep the natural Law, God overruled so that it had a beneficial effect on the natural health of the individual. The bottom line with commandments, statutes, and judgments was *obedience to God's Word*.

**Comment:** Moses' saying, "These are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded [me] to teach you," shows his personal role in teaching the Israelites so that they would "fear the LORD thy God." With Moses being a representation of Jesus, he was laying the groundwork for the Israelites to hear Jesus' words in the Kingdom.

**Reply:** Yes, the instruction of the Law certainly pointed forth to Christ. Jesus said, "Moses ... wrote of me," and different perspectives can be pursued with regard to how Moses did this (John 5:46). The standpoint here in chapter 6 pertains to *moral* deportment.

Moses commanded the Israelites to keep all of God's statutes and commandments—"thou, and thy son, and thy son's son [three generations, down to the grandchildren], all the days of thy life." Each individual Jew was instructed to teach his family that there was a personal responsibility not only for his own obedience but also for the instruction of his family as part of his parental responsibilities so that "thy days may be prolonged."

**Deut. 6:3** Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

Moses repeatedly used expressions like "Hear therefore, O Israel," "Hear, O Israel," and "Now therefore hearken, O Israel" (Deut. 4:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). With a prolongation of days being the result of obedience, a multiplication of the population would naturally ensue, and the Lord's blessing would attend the increase. Of course numbers are not always an evidence of favor, but when they are the result of obedience, the whole congregation is wonderfully blessed.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 7:12-16 promised that obedience would bring the Israelites not only natural blessings but also God's love, their own multiplication, no barren wombs, the removal of sickness, and the consumption of all their enemies. The blessings would be so abundant that disobedience was foolish.

**Reply:** The cup of blessing God would pour would overflow if the Israelites would just obey. But the bottom line of all the blessings pertained to the lengthening of their days in one fashion or another and the increase in population.

"As the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey." The author of a book written many years ago entitled *Palestine, Land of Promise* mentioned, among other things, that when he was in the air above the land to study the topography and the feasibility of digging canals for irrigation and electrical power, he could see that the mountainous terrain of Israel had been terraced to an astounding degree for the growing of olive trees and for other agricultural purposes. The markings were in the ground, but the productivity of the reestablished nation of Israel has not yet matched that of the past. Certainly productivity in the Kingdom will reach that level or even surpass it.

**Comment:** The huge grapes that Joshua and Caleb and the other spies brought back from the Promised Land indicate the degree of fruitfulness back there.

**Reply:** Yes, the grapes were so large and heavy that they had to be carried suspended on a pole between two people.

**Comment:** In calling Israel a land of milk and honey, Exodus 3:8 also calls it a "large" and a "good" land. Today Israel is a tiny nation, but this Scripture proves its borders will be enlarged.

**Reply:** Yes, when the West Bank, Transjordan, and the land down to El Arish in the Sinai Peninsula are included in Israel's borders, the nation will be considerably larger. Especially when God's blessing is on the land, it will be more than ample to sustain the future population.

**Deut. 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Notice again, "Hear, O Israel"! Moses was no doubt a robust individual. At this time, at age 120, which was just before his demise, he was in the peak of strength. Probably he, as well as other prophets, was given extraordinary power of voice so that every word could be relatively

distinctly heard in order to be of greater benefit to a larger hearing assembly.

“The LORD our God is one LORD.” This is a good statement to counteract Trinitarians, yet they use all kinds of semantics to make a unity of three. Today Trinitarians go so far as to emphasize a biunity because any intellectual person even in the natural world can see that they cannot explain every Scripture. Because a sufficient number of Scriptures are insolvable, Trinitarians emphasize just Jesus and his Father, saying that Jesus is God. A large segment of Evangelical Christians even call him Jehovah.

**Comment:** The Israelites had just come out of Egypt, which had a culture with a multiplicity of Gods. Therefore, Moses was reinforcing the oneness of their God and warning them not to serve other gods.

**Reply:** Yes, and Israel’s God was invisible.

**Comment:** The thought in the Hebrew is, “Jehovah our *Elohim* [plural] is one Jehovah.” The majesty of God is shown by the plural.

**Comment:** Moses would have paused: “Jehovah our God is one [pause].” Then he reiterated: “Jehovah.”

**Comment:** The New American Standard reads, “Hear, O Israel. The LORD is our God. The LORD is one.”

**Reply:** The word “is,” being supplied, is italicized in the King James, so placement is optional, and the word can be inserted elsewhere as well.

**Deut. 6:5** And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

**Comment:** This command to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and might is not outwardly enforceable. With regard to the Law, there were a lot of outwardly enforceable ceremonies and statutes that might appear to be obeyed, but this intense love of Jehovah was inward.

**Reply:** Stated another way, there was a distinction between the letter of the Law and spontaneous obedience. In Psalm 119, David told how much he loved God’s Law, which was his meditation day and night. He loved God and His Law with all his heart, soul, and might.

**Comment:** If the Israelites had obeyed this one command, they would have been obedient in all of the commandments, statutes, and judgments. They would not have pursued other gods, and they would have recognized the Messiah.

**Reply:** They would have been as obedient as is possible in fallen flesh. They needed heart appreciation for God’s instruction and delight in obeying and doing His will with all their might to the extent possible.

**Deut. 6:6** And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Moses probably raised his voice a decibel higher when he uttered these words. He was so intense in his reasoning in giving utterance to what God had told him that his words were purposely repetitive. He was not speaking vain repetition because just three generations later, with the grandchildren, problems began to arise during the Period of the Judges. Earlier under Joshua, a faithfulness was demonstrated while the Israelites were busily engaged in fighting

foes in the land. His presence was powerful, being somewhat like that of Moses. However, with the decease of both leaders, problems quickly arose.

**Deut. 6:7** And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

A King James marginal reference is, “And thou shalt *engrave* them diligently....” The purpose was to crease the cranium with these good commandments, to score a groove in the memory.

**Comment:** With verse 7 not mentioning work or labor, the implication is that while the parent was around his children morning and evening, he was to discuss the commandments, and at other times, he was to teach them how to sustain their life by work. His time in the house was to be devoted to instruction of the Lord.

**Reply:** Yes. As Christians, we endeavor to do the same. Most of us have to do secular work eight hours a day and sometimes not in the best environment, but in our leisure moments, if we are not too fatigued, one of the first things we want to do is mediate on the Lord’s Word or fellowship with those of like precious faith.

**Comment:** Verse 7 is related to loving God with all the heart. During every waking moment, when possible, God is on the mind.

**Reply:** By following the advice in verse 7, one was an exemplar to his family, and the children were more likely to do the same when they grew up.

**Comment:** The last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, one’s thoughts were to be on the Lord. We are reminded of the Morning Resolve: “My earliest thought I desire shall be, What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?” (Psa. 116:12).

**Comment:** Proverbs 6:20-22 contains a parallel thought: “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.”

**Deut. 6:8** And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

Instead of using cosmetics to glorify themselves, the Jews were to wear outward signs and symbols that pointed to the Lord. Such garnishment created good habits, for both natural and spiritual Israelites are what they think. As the Apostle Paul said, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... [and] of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

**Comment:** Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for a wrong spirit: “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments” (Matt. 23:5).

**Reply:** Circumstances at the First Advent and even today are different than in Moses’ day. No longer are Astoreth and Molech worshipped with infants being burned alive and cannibalism in society. Thus it is not as necessary to bind commandments on the hand and put them in frontlets between the eyes.

**Deut. 6:9** And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

This practice is still followed by Orthodox Jews. It is helpful for Christians to have Scripture texts on the wall or in other exposed places not only to remind ourselves but also to let others know where we stand.

**Deut. 6:10** And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not,

**Deut. 6:11** And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God would give them “great and goodly cities, ... houses full of all good things,” wells, vineyards, and olive trees. There is an antitype with the Christian.

**Comment:** God provides everything the Christian needs. “Wells,” which furnish water, are the Bible, the source of truth. “Olive trees” picture the Holy Spirit. “Vineyards” are doctrines.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt. 19:29).

**Comment:** From the perspective of the Promised Land being the inheritance beyond the veil, Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). And Paul said, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

**Comment:** Philippians 4:19 applies: “God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” God supplies not only our necessities but also additional blessings in superabundance.

**Reply:** Yes, He opens the windows of heaven to us, spiritually speaking. Another area of blessing is the spiritual family. One’s friends increase a hundredfold. The spiritual family of a Christian outnumbers and, in most instances, is closer than his natural family. Especially in this Laodicean period, many spouses also consecrate, and spiritual interest usually comes down through family lineage.

When we sum up the thoughts, Malachi 3:10 comes to mind: “Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” God does more for us than we could ever imagine. What we receive is not the product of our own wisdom, energy, understanding, or efforts, but blessings are available based on the depth of our commitment to serve God in fullness of heart and spirit.

**Deut. 6:12** Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Verse 12 was a warning to the Israelites not to forget that God had brought them out of bondage in Egypt. In antitype, it is a warning to Christians not to forget that God brought them out of the world and bondage to sin and death.



**Comment:** We must not attribute to self the things that the Lord does for us.

**Comment:** Once we have been freed from sins in the past—sins prior to consecration—we must never forget the freedom that has been given to us at the hand of the Lord.

**Comment:** Jesus criticized Christians in the Laodicean period of the Church for their attitude. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

**Reply:** The Laodicean spirit of ease, wealth, satisfaction, etc., is a great trial for the Christian at the present time.

**Comment:** Proverbs 30:7-9 reads, “Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

**Reply:** Both trials and pleasures can distract the Christian, leading him to forget the Lord. Jesus said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41).

**Deut. 6:13** Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

**Deut. 6:14** Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

It is amazing how quickly the Israelites forgot, especially after the ten plagues, the opening of the Red Sea, and other mighty miracles. The books of Deuteronomy and Joshua show that the younger generation was quite obedient, generally speaking, during the days of Joshua, and the people did some very unusual things. For instance, the whole multitude obediently kept silent for seven days while they marched around Jericho. With the third generation, however, old problems returned, including following other gods. How essential it is for parents to teach their children, and then for the adult children to instruct the grandchildren, etc., in order to preserve faith and the blessing of the Lord in the family!

**Deut. 6:15** (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

God has a right to be “a jealous God,” for He is the Emperor of the universe, the “Father of [all] spirits” (Heb. 12:9). He is worthy to be honored with the utmost obedience.

**Deut. 6:16** Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Meribah is usually coupled with Massah, where the Israelites murmured for water and Moses initially struck the rock, which produced water through the power of God (Exod. 17:1-7). This incident shows how early in the wilderness wanderings the Israelites disobeyed. In fact, just as there were ten plagues upon the Egyptians, so the Israelites experienced ten plagues in the wilderness to sift out the ungodly element from the host. The murmuring was expressed in question form: “And the people thirsted there for water; and ... murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? ... Is the LORD among us, or not?” (Exod. 17:3,7).

**Comment:** Massah means “temptation.”

**Reply:** Yes. Although the people were truly thirsty, God had warned in advance that He would try them to see if they really loved Him with all their heart, mind, and soul. With the delay in the assuaging of their thirst, they should have realized the experience was a test of patiently waiting for God to exercise His promised care. The Lord similarly tests us, and if we are not careful, we will murmur with regard to God's providence. Instead of wondering why there is a delay, we should realize that the delay is a test of our faith.

**Deut. 6:17** Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

The Israelites were to diligently keep God's commandments, testimonies, and statutes. Moses' words are similar to New Testament instructions to spiritual Israelites in the wilderness of sin of the present life. With wickedness increasing daily, Christians must watch and pray to be alert to the dangers that continually confront them. In present prevailing conditions of evil and low standards, it is even more difficult for an individual to make his calling and election sure. The Harvest work is becoming more and more a gleaning work, rather than a harvest of numbers.

**Deut. 6:18** And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers,

The Israelites were to "do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD." Thus works are a proof of one's faith.

**Comment:** Verse 18 reminds us of Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

**Reply:** Yes, life and death are set before the human race, and it is our choice. God highly respects freewill offerings. He is looking for those who obey Him out of the fullness of their heart. He greatly appreciates spontaneity of service rather than activities based on prudence.

"Do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: ... that thou mayest go in and possess the good land." The Christian is journeying to a "good land." The angels in heaven were probably amazed and startled to realize they were bypassed and, instead, tiny "human ants" are invited to the high calling.

Because of the proliferation of evil in our day, Paul encouraged Christians to assemble together even more as they see the day of Christ drawing near (Heb. 10:25). Without assemblage, there is the danger of slipping away and losing life altogether. Not only would current blessings and opportunities be lost, but even life itself. The point is that we need one another.

**Deut. 6:19** To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.

We are to rebuke Satan, just as Jesus did. A rebuke given with firmness and in faith is effectual. Of course we have to produce the faith that will produce the results.

**Deut. 6:20** And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?

Generally speaking, children observe the sincerity of their parents. The question is, Does the life of the parents match their profession?

**Deut. 6:21** Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:

Israelite parents were supposed to tell their sons of the bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt before God brought them out with a mighty hand. In antitype, the bondage was to Satan and his house, or "furnace of affliction" (Deut. 4:20; Isa. 48:10). One's joy over being delivered from such a background is very evident to a little child. The parents are to be role models as best they can. The child may ask about the circumstances that led the parents to consecration. How did God lead them out of the world with a mighty hand? Even if the question is not verbalized, the child observes the life of his parents and mentally questions to make sure the parents mean what they say.

It is interesting how children sometimes stand up for what they believe, perhaps writing a report for their English or history class. Children are tried as well as the parents. Spiritual survival is difficult in a college environment, especially if one lives on campus. It is essential to keep in close contact and fellowship with brethren in order to offset that environment.

**Comment:** Jesus said to his disciples, "Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Wanting to know, the son asks with an honest heart, "What is the meaning of these things?" Our attitude should be the same when we inquire about God's instruction; that is, we must be sincere.

**Reply:** Yes, and children sometimes ask searching questions.

**Deut. 6:22** And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:

"Great and sore" signs and wonders were shown before the Israelites' eyes. The children of Israel at this time—the ones Moses was addressing—were generally the purged remnant that would enter the Promised Land. They were the younger generation because the older ones had perished for disobedience.

The antitypical lesson is that the Lord's people need the Holy Spirit to conquer the enemies that beset them. Therefore, frequent fellowship brings results. Environment is a big factor, and it can change, or override, genetics for either good or bad.

Of the leading characters in the heavenly ranks, Paul murdered many Christians prior to his conversion, and Peter denied the Lord three times. However, their transgressions are not an excuse for us to intentionally dabble in sin and then ask for forgiveness because God is so merciful. Such sin is *premeditated*.

**Comment:** We are warned not to presume on God's grace and mercy. Such sins are called "presumptuous" (Psa. 19:13).

**Reply:** Like David, we should pray, "Keep back thy servant ... from presumptuous sins." Judas premeditated the betrayal of Jesus, whereas Peter denied Jesus when surprised by the circumstances and then fully repented subsequently. Those who are forgiven the most usually love and overcome the most and will ultimately be in the highest ranks of the Church. The same principle applies with the wealthy. If they consecrate and are faithful, their reward will be a higher destiny among the stars that differ in glory (1 Cor. 15:41).

**Deut. 6:23** And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land

which he swore unto our fathers.

**Deut. 6:24** And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

God commanded “us [the parents, and Moses included himself] to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God ... always, that he might preserve us.” Obedience to truth brings a natural benefit to health, that is, along the lines of the flesh to a certain extent.

Jesus said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20). Those who have a properly instructed faith would not say to a mountain, “Be thou cast into the midst of the sea,” because they know such a request is not in harmony with God’s will. But if they see that something is the Lord’s will and command it, the event will happen. Thus proper faith is an *instructed* belief that is based on the *principles and knowledge* of what would please God. That kind of faith would be able to do mighty miracles.

**Deut. 6:25** And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

If followed, the moral law of God, and to some extent the ceremonial law, lead to Christ. As a “schoolmaster,” they lead and instruct toward Christ (Gal. 3:24). Those who seriously tried to keep the Law and honestly evaluated themselves, thus realizing they could not live up to its requirements, would have prayed for forgiveness and help. Today such prayers are even more effectual because Jesus’ righteousness is the covering.

**Comment:** Back there the Israelites did not have a choice. Their “righteousness” came from observing the Law. In contradistinction, our righteousness comes from the robe of Christ.

**Reply:** Yes, and we are to add to our faith virtue, to our virtue knowledge, etc. (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Thus we are given commandments and instruction, but the arrangement for the Christian is one of mercy, grace, and forgiveness of shortcomings. The fact Christ came down here to die for us is *stupendous* information. It would be most interesting to know the circumstances under which Jesus made the commitment to his Heavenly Father to come to earth to die. John the Revelator “saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” (Rev. 5:2). None in heaven could do that until the Lamb came forward. Jesus’ worthiness above all of the other angels was demonstrated even in the fact that he volunteered to come down here. His obedience as the Logos was outstanding. What wonderful training he had as the Logos, whereas Satan’s freedom led to his downfall.

**Deut. 7:1** When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

These seven enemies occupied the Promised Land, which the Israelites were about to enter. Spiritually speaking, they represent enemies of the New Creation that are inherent in the inherited flesh of Adam. Because of the weaknesses of the flesh, these seven enemies have become very powerful except as the Holy Spirit countermands their leadings.

Notice that the Philistines and the Amalekites are missing from this list. When the Israelites entered the land under Joshua, they brought the seven enemies into subjection except for the Jebusites, with whom they compromised. The Amalekites lasted until David’s day, and the

Philistines were a problem throughout the entire 450-year Period of the Judges.

Verse 1 is a statement of fact. Moses said that the Israelites would enter the land, that God would give them the victory, and that they would possess the land. For the New Creation, who are entering the heavenly Promised Land, verse 1 is more or less an instructive picture.

**Deut. 7:2** And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them:

The Jebusites were a problem in David's day. In the conquering of Jerusalem, Joab, who was David's general, was successful in their capture.

**Comment:** The principle is that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9).

**Reply:** Yes, that is the problem with compromise, bargaining, and/or diplomacy with an enemy. No mercy was to be shown to the seven enemies.

**Deut. 7:3** Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

**Deut. 7:4** For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

Parents were responsible for seeing that their sons and daughters did not intermarry with any of these enemies. Each generation was to instruct its children. Other people can be very nice on the exterior, but God was warning of great dangers, particularly from the religious standpoint.

**Comment:** In his old age, Joshua repeated this exhortation with some additional emphasis. "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:11-13).

**Reply:** Yes, Joshua provided additional details of the dangers. Marriage was to be within each tribe. Thus the Israelites' liberties were not to extend beyond certain parameters.

**Comment:** As spiritual Israelites indeed, we are to avoid such marital practices as well. Otherwise, our faith could be shipwrecked.

**Reply:** Not being unequally yoked is part of making straight paths for our feet (Heb. 12:13).

**Comment:** The exception for marrying one who is unconsecrated is where a brother has kept company with a woman for some length of time prior to consecration.

**Reply:** Yes, under that circumstance, one could marry an unconsecrated person, for the woman had passed the "flower of her age" (1 Cor. 7:36).

**Comment:** The Christian is to wage holy warfare against the sins within, just as the Israelites were to utterly slay their enemies.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the thrust, but of course we cannot utterly destroy our sins. We need the help of the Holy Spirit in this lifetime battle, which continues until the flesh actually dies. Until the stake is pounded through the heart of these evils, or sins, pinning them to the ground, sin will always have undue power over the Christian. “Get thee behind me, Satan” must be our attitude (Luke 4:8). Trusting in the Lord, not self, for power and the victory is the experience of the Little Flock. When some Christians fall, the experience so awakens them to a realization of their danger and the Lord’s mercy in rescuing them that from henceforth, they exhibit in their life the determination the Lord is looking for.

**Comment:** The Apostle Paul said, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

**Reply:** Certainly that is the ideal, but each of us can attest to the fact that while we are to cast down every imagination, there are moments when we fail in certain respects because of fatigue or other circumstances. In other words, we cannot perfectly obey the Law of God as given to Moses because it condemns us. We are not victorious in every single instance in our life.

**Deut. 7:5** But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

Good King Josiah was remarkable in his zeal to rid the land of idols and the worship of false gods.

**Deut. 7:6** For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

Because of the history of God’s dealings with Israel, one might ask, How can they be a special people who are “above all people that are upon the face of the earth”? God even called them a “stiffnecked people” (Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5). However, when true conversion takes place, people of strong characters become very special above those who are just nice, benevolent, noble people. When transformed from their stubbornness, they are outstanding advocates for good. It is astounding that today, amidst present conditions in society, the little nation of Israel comes up with scientific, agricultural, and biological discoveries and inventions. Very small in number, the Jews are top-grade in honors.

**Deut. 7:7** The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

At present, Israel is a tiny nation among the large surrounding Muslim and Arab nations.

**Q:** Does this reference to Israel’s being the “fewest of all people” refer to the time when Jacob and those with him—70 souls in all—went down into Egypt? After that, the nation began to multiply miraculously.

**A:** Yes. However, what startles us is that 2 million Israelites exited Egypt and 2 million entered the Promised Land, so each of the seven enemies must have outnumbered the nation of Israel under Joshua. Moses gave this discourse at the end of the 40 years, which was about 1575 BC, a relatively late date not too far from the Christian era. Therefore, we can understand that the numbers would be large, but at the time of Jacob, there were only 70 individuals. During the 215 years the Israelites were in Egypt, they multiplied from 70 souls to 2 million people.

**Deut. 7:8** But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Because God, the great Jehovah, *loved* the Israelites and would keep the oath He had sworn unto their fathers, He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. As great as Moses was with his outstanding qualities as a servant of God, he was an imperfect mediator with a perfect Law. Moses looked forward to the Messiah (Heb. 11:24-26).

**Deut. 7:9** Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

**Deut. 7:10** And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

The “faithful God” keeps the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant “with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.” As originally given, before Abraham entered the Promised Land, the covenant was conditional upon his obedience. Following Abraham’s obedience, the covenant became unconditional, unilateral.

**Comment:** The colloquial expression “to a thousand generations” means “indefinitely.”

**Comment:** When verses 9 and 10 are combined, God is described as faithful and just.

**Reply:** Yes, verse 9 emphasizes God’s love (mercy) and faithfulness. Verse 10 talks about repaying those who hate Him. Thus love and hate are essential to the characters of all those in the Little Flock. Because Jesus *loved righteousness and hated iniquity*, God has anointed him “with the oil of gladness” above his fellows (Heb. 1:9). By birth, we tend to be lopsided in our development, being either too strict or too soft. God is looking for the balance of firmness of character with gentleness. These two characteristics blend into the type of individual the Lord is seeking to be the kings and priests of the future. There are conditions for everlasting life, and the education of our conscience becomes essential.

**Comment:** God is represented in Revelation 4:3 as being a combination of jasper (the diamond) and the softer sard stone.

**Comment:** With the Great Company being an immature, half-baked class, a danger, especially in Laodicea, is that they will be too emotional and merciful. The fact that the tribe of Ephraim is missing from the listing of spiritual tribes in Revelation 7:4-8 supports this thought.

**Reply:** To become a member of the Little Flock, one must be polarized in determination and singleness of purpose, whereas character development embraces other qualities that must be balanced or centralized. To win the race and gain the prize, one must run all out.

**Q:** Verse 1 started with God’s commandment to Israel to destroy the seven enemy nations. Wouldn’t some of the Israelites have been hesitant to kill women and children?

**A:** Not at the time of Joshua. Today we are fighting against not merely flesh and blood but also spirits in high places. The fight will call for the exercise of the utmost faith when the hour of temptation comes. Contained within that hour are both spiritual and natural forces, which will be overwhelming except for those who have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. God tells us not to

fear but to trust Him. We question within ourselves, “Do I have a sufficiency of faith?” If only we had the assurance that we would be faithful, we could rest secure. It is easy to talk in advance about what we will do, but when the test comes suddenly, how will we react? We cannot trust in ourselves but only in the Lord and His armor. Hopefully, we will put on all of the component parts of the armor (Eph. 6:13-17).

**Q:** How did God repay “to their face” the ones who hated Him?

**A:** There were two ways. The Israelites were a covenanted people, having promised at Mount Sinai, “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do” (Exod. 24:3). Now, at the end of the 40 years, Moses was advising the Israelites to keep the commandments, saying that God loved those who obeyed. Consequently, those who had His commandments and did not endeavor to keep them were at enmity with Him. (In antitype, the Israelites represent God’s professed people of the Gospel Age.) There were different types and degrees of repayment depending on the nature and degree of the sinfulness that was involved. God had promised the Israelites that if they kept His statutes, judgments, and commandments, He would greatly bless them. Not only would their seed multiply, but even their crops would prosper—the land as well as the fruit of the womb. And they would be in good health. Conversely, if they were not faithful, the opposite would take place in their present life back there. Generally speaking, the rewards and punishments were contemporary according to their obedience or disobedience. Therefore, if the Israelites experienced physical evils, they knew that something was wrong. However, the Scriptures do say that some men’s sins go beforehand to judgment and some men’s sins will follow afterward with stripes in the Kingdom Age, so there are exceptions (1 Tim. 5:24).

**Comment:** Fruitfulness of the womb was one of the promises for obedience, yet some of the holiest women in Old Testament times were providentially kept barren for a period of time for the purpose of the type. The test of barrenness must have been difficult for those women.

**Reply:** Yes, there were exceptions for higher purposes. Rewards will be given accordingly in the next life for obedience.

**Deut. 7:11** Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

**Deut. 7:12** Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers:

The overall lesson or principle of verses 11-15 is that obedience would bring temporal, natural blessings to the nation of Israel. The blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Instead of preceding the words with “Thus saith the LORD God,” Moses used a manner of address that was almost like a personal message. Of course the Holy Spirit was speaking through Moses, but he pursued a personalized method in giving the instruction. If the Israelites kept the judgments, God would keep “the covenant and the mercy” He had sworn unto their fathers.

**Deut. 7:13** And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

The noble statesman Moses included a tenderness in the fatherly counsel being given: “And he [God] will love thee [if you hearken to His judgments].” Such statements were probably most helpful to Joshua, Moses’ successor, who had been very obedient throughout the 40 years. God



would also bless and multiply the Israelites if they obeyed. He would bless the fruit of their wombs, their produce, and their flocks.

**Comment:** Moses' words sound almost like a reversal of the curse that was placed upon the ground following Adam's disobedience.

**Reply:** In giving such particularity of detail, Moses was delineating how the blessings would be fulfilled. He repeatedly reminded the Israelites that these blessings were God's promise and that they were about to enter the Land of Promise. God was the foster parent of His chosen people.

**Comment:** In thinking of the promise to Abraham, which was repeated to Isaac and Jacob, we see that Jacob prospered in regard to serving Laban, for the herds greatly increased. And Abraham was wealthy for his day, being blessed temporally.

**Reply:** Although no one could keep the Law perfectly and gain the reward of life, a certain leniency, mercy, and consideration attended those who purposed and exerted effort to comply to the best of their ability.

**Deut. 7:14** **Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.**

What a wonderful assurance that God would bless them for obedience!

**Comment:** Prior to the Exodus, the population growth of the Israelites was extraordinary and hence considered a threat by the Egyptians. Now they were given an additional promise of fruitfulness of the womb "above all [other] people."

**Deut. 7:15** **And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.**

Here is another wonderful promise of blessing for obedience—all sickness would be removed.

**Deut. 7:16** **And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.**

**Q:** From an antitypical standpoint, what does verse 16 represent? No pity was to be shown to "the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee."

**A:** First, before discussing lessons for the Christian, we will consider the type. The Israelites were very successful in eliminating the problem on the east side of the Jordan River. Now they were about to cross the river and enter Israel proper, where enemies were sprinkled throughout the land. For instance, the children, or strange progeny, of Anak still occupied the southern part of the land, and later, when the instructions of Moses and Joshua wore off—that is, in the third generation after this advice was given—problems occurred with the heathen gods of the land. The gruesome nature of those gods can be seen, especially in the Hebrew. Unfortunately, most translations soften the remarks of the Hebrew in regard to the sordid and sadistic cannibalistic behavior that accompanied heathen worship. Not only was the worship of foreign gods a problem but also the practices that accompanied the false religions. Hence a thorough purging was needed. Are there suggestions for the spiritual application of verse 16?

**Comment:** The seven nations that were to be utterly destroyed picture our old nature, namely, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites.

**Reply:** Sometimes the term “Canaanites” is used to cover all of these enemies, but they were actually a separate people. The seven peoples represent seven spiritual enemies that the Christian has to face, and perhaps most of the battle is in the mind-set. Various suggestions enter the mind to deviate from the path of righteousness. The old creature reasons that it is all right to dabble a little in order to get experience, but even temporary experimenting can wean the Christian away from doctrines that the Heavenly Father and Jesus have promulgated.

**Comment:** The Apostle Paul said, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:21).

**Reply:** To drink of both cups and partake of both tables is experimentation. Sometimes brethren think there is benefit in innovation, but a step in the wrong direction leads to another and another, whereas one step at a time in the right direction brings more security in attaining the future goal of the high calling.

**Q:** Did the instruction to have no pity on these inhabitants of the land include everyone—men, women, children, and the elderly?

**A:** Yes, there was to be a thorough cutting off. However, it should always be kept in mind that no torture was involved in putting them to death. In contrast, heathen worshippers took sadistic pleasure not only in being loyal to their religion but also in extracting the most excruciating pain. The cutting off was to be abrupt and thorough, and it was necessary. If we could see motion pictures of the practices of these heathen peoples, we would probably be astonished at the degree of depravity that resulted from the worship of their false gods. We would then see the necessity for a firm “Thus saith the LORD” and for handling the matter in this fashion.

**Comment:** Some of the incidents in the Old Testament show what vile and gruesome acts were committed, such as ripping open women who were pregnant.

**Reply:** Molech worship required the burning alive and even the eating of infants. The nuances of these practices are hidden in the Hebrew. If modern civilization could see the cannibalistic behavior that occurred back there, they would have a different perspective in reading the Old Testament. By God’s grace, we were born with some natural faith, which has blossomed since we dedicated our lives to serve Him. As a result, we trust in the wisdom of His instructions, knowing they do not inherently contradict the statement that He is the God of love (1 John 4:8). The seeming contradictions will be sorted out and thoroughly revealed and explained in the Kingdom, when man will walk by sight rather than by faith, as we do in the Gospel Age.

**Deut. 7:17** If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?

**Comment:** The principle with the seven nations is similar to the Christian’s saying, “I have too much sin. How can I overcome it?”

**Reply:** That is true, but *faith* gives the victory. Faith can overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

When the Israelites fought these enemies, they battled them one at a time. Not only did the Israelites enter the land one step at a time, but they fought one enemy at a time. The Lord is

gracious in not allowing us to be inundated with the permission of evil so that we can develop a measure of strength with victories and partial victories. Hopefully, we are growing in understanding and experience from the infant stage into teenage maturity and then adulthood. The growth is accomplished in steps and stairs.

However, if we think of, and try to overcome, all of our enemies at the same time, the effort is overwhelming. One brother used the illustration of a woman who is contemplating marriage. If she could see in advance the mountains of meals she would have to cook and the number of dishes she would have to wash as an obedient wife, the overwhelming experience would make her think twice about entering into wedlock. But when the chores are done little by little each day, each week, and each year and on and on, those doing them become veterans. The mind can enlarge and exaggerate a situation, whereas the Lord has promised He will not overwhelm us but will guide us by His hand through trials and difficulties. This happens in a gradual manner whether or not we appreciate His method.

**Comment:** We are not to look at the number and strength of the enemies but are to rely on the strength of God. For example, David was punished when he asked Joab to number the Israelites to see if there were enough fighting men to overcome the enemy (2 Sam. 24:1-15). Instead David should have relied on the strength of the Lord. The principle is, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).

**Reply:** Yes, several pertinent incidents are recorded in the Old Testament. On another occasion, David slew the giant Goliath. Faith in God brings the victory.

**Deut. 7:18** **Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;**

Past experience with both victories and defeats is helpful. Each experience—and our reaction to it—has instructional value for the lessons learned and for the experiences that will confront us in the future. As has been said, it is not the gale but the set of the sail that determines the goal.

**Comment:** Romans 8:31 expresses the same theme: “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

**Deut. 7:19** **The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.**

**Comment:** The “mighty hand” was used to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. God told Moses, “Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.... And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen” (Exod. 14:16,26).

**Reply:** We think we understand exactly where the Israelites traversed the land of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. A particular nodule, a little hillock, is situated just before the place where they crossed. It seems reasonable to assume that Moses climbed that natural “pulpit” and then stretched out his hand so that the Israelites could see him raise his hand according to the Lord’s instruction. Dramatic visual demonstrations were made possible to a great portion of the nation so that they could enter into God’s instructions and providences with proper empathy. In view of the tremendous victories and miracles performed on their behalf, the Israelites were without excuse for their later behavior and disobedience.

**Deut. 7:20** **Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that**

**are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.**

**Comment:** Two other Scriptures mention the hornet. “And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee” (Exod. 23:28). “And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow” (Josh. 24:12).

The symbol of a fly was used in Egypt, although it looked more like a bee. It was believed that the god who could control the insects of nature to fight for a people against an enemy was the “lord” of that particular incident. The devil is sometimes likened unto Beelzebub, which means “lord of the fly.” The Adversary copied many of the symbols the Lord used and gave them another application. In this case, Satan perverted the Hebrew account as stated here in Deuteronomy, for Jehovah is the Lord of the hornet. The Pharaohs who used these symbols ruled at a later date than is commonly perceived.

We do not usually think of an insect as having a brain, so to have a command over insects is more extraordinary than having a command over an animal or a beast. In verse 20, God shows that He is the Lord of anything, animate or inanimate, that He wishes to be His “angel” and do His bidding. For example, if an enemy fled and hid, hornets could pursue that enemy even into the holes of a cave, and screams from the pain of the stings revealed the hiding place to the Israelites. It was as though the hornets guided the Israelites to the hiding place so that they could destroy the enemy. Thus even the remnant who escaped was sought out and killed, and the land was subsequently inhabited in peace. Hornets are tenacious in pursuing their victim.

In recent times, some miraculous incidents occurred in regard to Israel’s defeat of the Arabs, especially in the war of independence in 1948. There was an incident with hornets. Another incident involved putting stones in empty barrels and rolling them down the hill at night. Hearing the sound of the rattling, the Palestinians thought a large enemy host was pursuing them, and they fled in panic. For a week or two, the Israelis claimed that God had given them the victory. Shortly afterward, many credited their own efforts.

**Q:** Is there a spiritual significance to the hornet?

**A:** Yes. The significance would depend on the nature of the temptation. For instance, along sexual lines, the devil might use a woman (or a man depending on the gender of the one being tempted) to entice a Christian to be disloyal to his covenant. The instrument of temptation persists even when given a rebuff, not taking “no” for an answer. With tenacity in one way or another, the tempter ingeniously uses wiles. Proverbs 7 pictures an innocent young man who ends up in the residence of an immoral woman through her wiles. The Christian is tempted in various ways along the lines of the flesh. Certain practices might be employed through an inordinate appetite, for example. The devil must be abruptly resisted: “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Sometimes we do not realize that Satan is behind the temptation. Unseen powers exist to try to stumble the Lord’s children in their walk. We fight “not against flesh and blood [only], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

Another example is an invitation to a seance. One must take a definitive stand in order to offset the demon power that can be exercised at the table. A brother related years ago about the dangers of the Ouija board, which was a method of beguiling him. He had been told about fallen angels but did not believe in them. Therefore, their existence had to be proven to him, and several incidents with the Ouija board woke him up.

Another brother was tempted by a fallen angel through a woman who claimed the individual

would become a great violinist by listening to the advice. Seeing that the influence was evil, the brother cut it off, but the fallen angel was tenacious. After the brother had been consecrated for a number of years, the same woman came to his residence, which was even in a place distant from where the original experience had taken place. When he saw her, he was astonished and let her in. During the subsequent conversation at the table, the brother's wife said she did not believe in fallen angels. Lo and behold, from the floor in a corner of the room came forth a voice responding to her. That experience woke her up, although she played dumb at the time, pretending she had not heard the voice. We relate this experience to show the persistency that can be involved with a temptation, especially if one has a particular inherited weakness, a besetting sin along this line (Heb. 12:1).

**Deut. 7:21** **Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.**

If the Israelites obeyed, they would “not be affrighted at them [their enemies—the Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites],” for the LORD their God was among them, “a mighty God and terrible [awesome].”

**Deut. 7:22** **And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.**

**Comment:** If the Israelites conquered the land too quickly, they would not have time to cultivate it and thus keep the beasts from moving in and the land from going back to the wild.

**Reply:** That is one reason. In cultivating the land in ancient times, people usually constructed a tower so that they could see if any beasts or predators were encroaching on their property.

**Q:** Was the land also conquered little by little to help the Israelites see the hand of the Lord over a period of time?

**A:** Yes, they would be assured that God was among them. The principle was the same with the Ark of the Covenant being in their midst.

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, God said, “I did not choose you because you are a mightier nation than the seven nations that occupy the land, for they are greater in number than you” (Deut. 7:7). If the seven enemies are considered collectively, many millions of people were involved, for Israel itself had 2 million people. Moreover, the Israelites were to fight one enemy at a time and thus conquer the land. Of course the step-by-step, foot-by-foot conquering was also related to preventing beasts from entering the land.

**Comment:** Another practical reason for conquering the enemy one by one is that the dead were not buried, and the greater the number of dead bodies, the more the wild beasts would be attracted to enter the land and devour them.

**Reply:** Yes, the corpses were bounty to the beasts. The land had to be cleansed, for it was considered defiled while the corpses were exposed.

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, Christians are to conquer their enemies little by little, especially the enemies of the flesh, for victories that come too fast are not as appreciated.

**Comment:** Matthew 12:43-45 brings in another aspect: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and

garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” If, when the evil influence is removed, the void is not replaced with the Holy Spirit, the unclean spirit returns with seven other unclean spirits, and the individual is in an even worse state.

**Reply:** When an evil spirit is evacuated from the mind of a Christian, that vacuum has to be filled as best he can with proper “furniture”—with good thoughts and occupations beneficial to the new creature—so that a reintrusion of fallen spirits will be more difficult. Otherwise, the last condition can be worse than the first. Prayer, fasting, and filling the mind with holy music, thoughts, reading, etc., are necessary to keep the “room” occupied.

**Deut. 7:23** But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

Notice that “the LORD” was conquering the enemies. Even though the Israelites were fighting battles, *God* gave the victory. There is an obvious spiritual counterpart because spiritual enemies are more powerful than the Christian. Principalities, powers, “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” and “spiritual wickedness in high places” are far superior unless the Lord is on our side (Eph. 6:12).

**Deut. 7:24** And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.

**Comment:** A repeated theme in the Book of Deuteronomy was the necessity to withstand and destroy the enemy peoples who occupied the Promised Land. Since this command occurred at the end of the 40 years, the indication seems to be that Christians at the end of the Gospel Age will particularly have to withstand and resist the fallen angels.

**Reply:** Yes, that statement is true when the account is spiritualized.

**Comment:** Verse 24 hones in on the problem, thus giving the Christian confidence in God.

**Reply:** Verse 24 is a promise *from God*, and faith is trust *in God's promises*. To spiritually identify each of the seven evils, evil spirits, or enemies is beyond our comprehension. The account is saying that the Christian has different enemies, but they are all of the same origin—they are all comrades of Satan in one form or another. Usually the more successful enemies are those that encroach upon an individual's particular weakness, the besetting sin. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). If Christians are honest in examining themselves, each one knows of a particular weakness that requires the most struggle and is especially difficult to overcome. Therefore, the besetting sin is one of the seven enemies.

**Deut. 7:25** The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

**Deut. 7:26** Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.

The silver and the gold of a graven image were to be burned with fire because they were “an abomination to the LORD thy God” and “a cursed thing.”

**Comment:** Achan’s sin was keeping a Babylonish garment and not destroying it (Josh. 7:20-25).

**Comment:** The Israelites were to utterly destroy everything connected with the worship of heathen gods. In a study on the “Practical Law” many years ago, the statement was made that it would be wrong to meet in a room that was used by an occult group.

**Reply:** The burning with fire had a purifying effect and kept the Israelites from desiring and coveting the abominations. Even though an idol might have a monetary value because of the gold and silver, the radical treatment shows how infectious the cursed idol was. It was to be completely detested.

The same principle applies to evil spirits. For example, years ago advertisements offered to put a curse on an enemy. The individual had to send in an article that belonged to the enemy so that a curse could be placed upon it. Then the article was returned to its owner, who was unaware of what had transpired. The evil spirit thus gained a foothold into that home. The same principle operates with regard to items that belong to a spirit medium. Even the room the spirit medium sleeps in or occupies becomes contaminated, and if the house is sold, it becomes a “haunted” house. The spirit principalities are very powerful. As Christians, we are sometimes tested, but by God’s grace, we are protected from destruction.

**Comment:** From a positive perspective, Paul blessed handkerchiefs and sent them out for good (Acts 19:11,12).

**Reply:** Yes, that was a constructive purpose.

**Deut. 8:1** All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

**Comment:** Multiplying is a practical way of overcoming enemies. Today the Palestinians and the Jews are having what is almost like a breeding race. The Israelis want to hold onto their advantage, and the Palestinians want to overcome with numbers. The thought is that the greater the population, the greater the representation.

**Reply:** All things being equal, not too many years down the road, the Palestinians will be equivalent in number to the Israelis. If the practices of the Orthodox were entertained by all of the Jews, they would easily counterbalance what the Palestinians are doing at present. However, the Orthodox Jews are only about 20 percent of the Jewish population, and the other 80 percent do not have as many children. From a spiritual standpoint, those logistics produce the same type of arithmetic with the Palestinians and the evil spirits in countermanding Jewish and other influences. For example, as gay marriages, homosexuals, and libertarians increase greatly in number, morality declines.

**Deut. 8:2** And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

God led the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness, giving them blessings and hard experiences to “prove” whether they would keep His commandments and what their heart condition was, and He does the same in principle with spiritual Israel. Christians go through a

“wilderness” experience to learn obedience and faith. The testing was meant for the good of the Israelites. If, under the proving, or testing, they had been obedient and had humbled themselves and been teachable, that experience would have crystallized and hardened them in righteousness and granted them superior qualities of character. However, the opposite result occurred when the experiences were not met with faith, trust, and obedience. God stated even earlier, when taking the Israelites out of Egypt in the Exodus, that it was His purpose to prove whether they really loved Him and would walk in His Law (Exod. 16:4).

**Deut. 8:3** And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

One who is not familiar with Scripture might consider verse 3 from the wrong perspective, that is, as the older Israelites regarded God’s providences and testings. Jesus explained the bread that came down from heaven in two ways: (1) It represented his flesh, and (2) it pictured his words. The “manna” is spiritual, mental, and moral food for the new creature, but even from a worldly standpoint, the Israelites should have exercised a lot of natural faith. Jesus quoted part of this verse, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” and the principle was used elsewhere in Scripture (Matt. 4:4).

**Deut. 8:4** Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

For 40 years, the Israelites’ clothing did not wax old, for it was supernaturally preserved. And their feet did not swell, even though they walked much of the time in rough desert terrain. Thus neither their clothing nor their sandals wore out.

**Comment:** As the Israelites had children, they passed the same sandals down to the younger ones growing up.

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, the raiment not waxing old pictures the Christian’s robe of Christ’s righteousness, which remains effective and does not wear out as long as one is faithful. The sandals, which separated the foot from the earth, show that the Christian is to touch lightly the things of this earth.

**Reply:** Yes. When we think of Christian armor, the sandals picture feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—the sandals of peace (Eph. 6:15). That peace, the “peace of God,” has a preservative influence and “passeth all [worldly] understanding” (Phil. 4:7).

**Deut. 8:5** Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

**Comment:** Paul gave the counterpart for the Christian: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:6-8).

**Reply:** Even natural faith should have seen God’s hand. For instance, the Israelites marched three days in desert conditions without water until they really thirsted. When the Lord miraculously provided water for them subsequently, they should have *considered* the miracle. Not only did God give them water, but He gave the water in a most unusual fashion—through Moses’ speaking to and striking the rock. On another occasion, when they murmured for meat, the wind brought down such a superabundance of quail that quantities were piled around their



tents like a fortress. Very, very startling miracles occurred that should have awakened even the natural man to his senses, but the Israelites were too involved in thinking about themselves and forgot that God had said He would prove them. It is amazing that they murmured so often and were not thankful when they got the water and did not praise God with thanksgiving and say, “I am sorry that I murmured.” Their reaction shows how people can be blind to startling events that are providentially occurring either in their own lives or in the lives of those around them. The Pastor said that God’s providences met with obedience and trust constitute the means whereby we are progressively sanctified, or set apart, to Him.

**Deut. 8:6** Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

**Deut. 8:7** For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

To be a “good land,” water was needed, and the land had “brooks of water” and “fountains [from hillsides] and depths [from below] that spring out of valleys and hills.” Wonderful crops and other blessings were possible through water. Spiritually speaking, “water” pictures truth. To have a supply of truth to nurture one in his pilgrim journey is certainly a blessed asset.

**Comment:** The good land was not just a land of water but a land of *all kinds* of water, without which the blessings of following verses would not have been possible. With Christians too, without the Lord’s truth, the other blessings in our lives would not be possible.

**Reply:** Truth, prayer, and faith are essential for progress in other fruitage. Hope, love, patient endurance, and so forth, are made possible by the spiritual water.

**Deut. 8:8** A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

Moses used the expression “a land of oil olive,” and not “a land of olive trees,” in order to emphasize the olives possessing the oil—*olive oil*—which was used for food and light (picturing enlightenment of the Holy Spirit). An unguent, olive oil has medicinal and healing properties.

**Comment:** Enemies had produced these crops, which the Israelites appropriated upon entering the land.

**Reply:** Yes, and Christians similarly receive a Godsend when they come into the truth. Not only are past sins forgiven, but they enter into a banquet.

**Comment:** Sometimes we think of honey from a negative standpoint as picturing flattery, but when John the Revelator asked for the little book, the angel said, “Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey” (Rev. 10:9). In other words, the Scriptures are sweet like honey to our being, but they bring responsibility.

**Reply:** Honey was used medicinally in olden times, and it does not spoil.

**Comment:** Just a little taste of honey on his sword revived Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:25-29).

How blessed the Israelites were to come into this inheritance with such a variety of food! In the wilderness, they complained about the monotonous daily manna, but that diet was intended to school them.

**Deut. 8:9** A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

The Israelites' entry into the Promised Land has three applications. (1) As Christians, we apply the advice on this side of the veil in regard to both our enemies and our prosperity as new creatures. We received an abundance of blessings when we came into the truth. (2) From the natural standpoint, the human race will enter the Promised Land in the Kingdom. (3) Natural Israel literally entered the Promised Land under Joshua. The applications have to be kept separate. With us now, and with the world in the Kingdom, Jesus is the chief figure.

“A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it.” Spiritually speaking, “bread” is the daily heavenly manna. In the land, the literal “stones are iron”; that is, they contain iron ore, which pictures fortitude. Out of the “hills thou mayest dig brass [copper],” which perhaps represents crystallization of character.

**Comment:** The Israelites had to exert effort to “dig” the copper. Accordingly, Christians must exert effort to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil and to develop a Christlike character.

**Reply:** Yes. For instance, the sockets of the posts in the Court were made of copper, picturing justification. But that justification should be like a breastplate and not just theoretical. Faith and fortitude effect the change into an *outward* upright, righteous character with firmness amidst opposition. In contradistinction, the iron represents an *inner* fortitude.

**Comment:** After the “bread” (the Holy Scriptures), the Christian uses “stones” of iron to build towers for fortification. The copper is used for instruments of spiritual warfare.

**Deut. 8:10** When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

**Comment:** The consecrated who live in this country have an abundance of both material and spiritual blessings.

**Reply:** Yes, it is a blessing to live in the United States, for temporal benefits can be utilized in Christian service. We should render thanks to God, for these gifts do not come of our own righteousness or goodness. Our calling in this country was providential.

**Comment:** There seems to be a relationship to Jesus' words to the church of Laodicea.

**Reply:** Yes, Jesus criticized the attitude “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17).

**Deut. 8:11** Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

Moses was a spokesperson for God in Old Testament times. What a wonderful channel he was in transmitting this valuable advice not to forget God's commandments, judgments, and statutes! Unfortunately, many of the consecrated are not too familiar with the Law of Moses. They concentrate on the gospel and do not consider that *God* instituted the Law and that *He* is superior to Jesus. God's Law will last forever. After the Kingdom Age, not only will there be no more grace or covenants of forgiveness and mercy, but perfect obedience will be required.

**Comment:** When Christians are full of abundance, they have a tendency to drift away from the Lord. The Church is strengthened through persecution and adversity. Similarly, when natural

Israel became “fat,” the nation strayed (Deut. 32:15).

**Reply:** Yes, the Christian, who is sometimes misunderstood, receives opposition for truth and for adhering closely to the Lord’s instructions. The Apostle Paul said, “Hast thou faith? have [keep] it to thyself before God” (Rom. 14:22). Some want to show their faith mostly by their mouth rather than by deeds. Instead we are to be slow to speak and quick to hear (James 1:19).

**Deut. 8:12** Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

Moses warned of dangers the Israelites would encounter in the Promised Land following their victorious entry and success in battle. As Christians, we are supposed to be pilgrims longing for our change as we mature, but the tendency with temporal prosperity is to rest comfortably and enjoy the fruits and even sleep. Another problem is that many rest comfortably, feeling they will be of the Little Flock. To the contrary, the Apostle Paul said we are to run the race as if there is only one winner. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24). Unfortunately, many are comfortable with past deeds. Rest and putting off the armor can be very dangerous.

**Comment:** A parallel is Sodom, in which pride, fullness of bread, and the abundance of idleness led to gross sins. “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezek. 16:49).

**Comment:** Another parallel is Paul’s criticism to the church at Corinth, “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us” (1 Cor. 4:8).

**Comment:** Moses’ warnings were in contradistinction to the life the Israelites led in Egypt.

**Reply:** Yes, the hard conditions in Egypt created a longing for deliverance, but with a “full” condition, the tendency is to forget about deliverance, redemption, and what God requires.

**Comment:** Many in the nominal systems teach that the Lord wants to give temporal benefits to the Christian in the present life: wealth, health, nice houses, etc. The implication is that being poor is due to a lack of faith.

**Reply:** Yes, they say in effect, “Just believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will receive material blessings.” Moreover, they preach “once saved, always saved.”

**Deut. 8:13** And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

**Deut. 8:14** Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

The multiplication of herds, flocks, silver, and gold tends to lift up the heart in pride and cause one to forget the past. To the contrary, as Christians, we should remember our situation prior to consecration and what the Lord did for us. Not only were we in darkness, but we had no real objective in life and were confused and misshapen. And we should reflect on how the Lord providentially helped us as new creatures in our early days of consecration. The contrast with our present status enables us to see many providences that God has worked on our behalf. To state the matter succinctly, it is good to take spiritual inventory from time to time.

**Comment:** How wonderful that we can go to the Lord in prayer in our sicknesses! We have access to the Creator of the universe through prayer.

**Comment:** With regard to life before consecration, we do not forget the past, but we have made peace with it.

**Comment:** Everything we have comes from the Lord.

Instead of murmuring, the Israelites should have remembered how God miraculously delivered them from Egypt, fed them with bread from heaven, and made water come out of a rock, among other things. If, as natural people, they heard Almighty God speak from Mount Sinai and forgot, we can see that in the next age, in spite of the reign of righteousness and Jesus' leadership, people will also forget. When Satan is loosed at the end of the Kingdom Age, the number of those who follow him will be as the sand of the sea for multitude (Rev. 20:7,8). Even with all the blessings of the Kingdom Age, a sizable portion of the human race will refuse to really hear. We are reminded of Amos 8:4-6, "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" When Christ reigns with a rod of iron in the Kingdom Age, many will be high-minded and be just waiting to return to their former situation.

**Q:** Lucifer was a perfect being in a perfect environment, yet he fell. Therefore, what makes us think that in the Kingdom Age down here, all will be on the right path?

**A:** Yes, and without the rod of iron in the next age, it is possible that the results would be like Joshua and Caleb, with scarcely anyone being saved. Jesus' enforcement of the reign of righteousness will show the benefits that can accrue from being at one with God, as opposed to thinking too much of self with greed and covetousness in one form or another.

**Deut. 8:15** Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

God led the Israelites "through that great and terrible wilderness," delivering them from fiery serpents, scorpions, and drought. Water even flowed out of rock that was as hard as flint—yet they forgot. Israel's experience shows us, as Christians, the importance of remembering all that the Lord has done. The danger is that we could forget the Lord's instructions and the purpose of our calling and have one foot on earth and the other foot in heaven. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

**Comment:** Moses mentioned God's bringing "forth water out of the rock of flint." Since the transgression that barred him from entering the Promised Land was smiting the rock twice, he seems to be acknowledging here that the power belonged to God.

**Reply:** Yes. In other words, this reference was a form of repentance, for he had said, "Must we [referring to himself and Aaron] fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10,11).

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, we are first brought out of the house of bondage in Egypt. Then we are led through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, scorpions, drought, and all manner of things that could destroy us, and we are given water, food, protection under the cloud, etc. One would wonder how Christians, who have had all these

blessings, could forget what the Lord has done.

**Reply:** From one standpoint, the experience in the wilderness is the Gospel Age, and the experience after entering the Promised Land is the Kingdom Age. As already stated, some of these pictures have three applications. As Christians, we were brought out of Satan's kingdom and then introduced to the fiery experiences of the present life, but God had said, "I will try you and prove you to see whether you really love me" (Deut. 8:2). When the Israelites were in the desert for three days without water, they did not wait long enough for deliverance to come but murmured instead. God does miraculous things to sustain us, but the waiting period is designed to develop self-control and patient endurance. Delay and doubt help us to exercise faith and obedience when everything seems to be contrary. Thus God uses the technique of delay to strengthen our spiritual muscles.

**Deut. 8:16** Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

God "fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not." God's purpose in feeding the Israelites with manna was to "humble ... [and] prove" them.

**Comment:** With mankind being so far removed from God, it is easy for them to forget there is a Creator. Moses kept reminding the Israelites of this fact.

**Reply:** Yes, verse 16 is not vain repetition. Repetition has its place; it is vain and empty only when there is no instructional value. Here the repetition was very meaningful. Of course we are aware of the *miraculous* nature of the manna, which fed Israel on a daily basis. The people had to go out with baskets and collect the manna each day except for the sabbath. However, the manna was like the sunrise. Because the sun comes up every day, people do not think of its miraculous performance. Thus the Israelites began to consider the manna as a normal occurrence. We have to reason on God's providence in order to receive instruction. Otherwise, we are easily lulled into forgetfulness.

**Comment:** The principle of dispensational truth is shown in antitype. Just as the Israelites gathered manna daily, so in whatever stage of the Church a Christian lives, he is to gather dispensational truth "which thy fathers knew not." For example, truths are due in Laodicea that those in the Philadelphia period did not understand. Since truth keeps increasing, "manna" has to be gathered daily.

**Comment:** Obedience was required in gathering the manna. It had to be gathered daily and could not be stored up except for the day before the sabbath. Otherwise, it bred worms and stank. Another lesson was dependency on God.

**Reply:** Yes, generally speaking, the partaking was to take place on the day the manna was gathered.

The general lesson is that God miraculously fed the Israelites, and the manna was confined to the 40 years of their wilderness wanderings. The nearest similar kind of miracle occurred during Jesus' ministry, when he multiplied the bread to feed the multitudes. He purposely did this miracle to remind the people of what had happened during Moses' ministry, and Moses was a type of Jesus. Of many, many lessons with regard to the manna, we are trying to get just the principal ones in this study.

**Comment:** It was necessary to break the human spirit of pride first. The Israelites had to realize that *God* was providing the manna. They were the recipients of the manna, not the originators.

**Reply:** The Israelites had to learn the lesson of total dependence on the Lord rather than on personal strength, wisdom, and ingenuity. The humbling aspect is brought out in many places, such as Deuteronomy 8:2, “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.” The next verse is also repetitive: “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know.”

With regard to God’s humbling and proving the Israelites, as the manna continued day after day, they should have learned that their dependency was on Him and that He was interested in caring for them. Then when other adversities or experiences occurred, they would trust him. For instance, when they had no water to drink for three days, the Israelites thought the experience was a legitimate reason for complaining. They murmured against Moses as God’s spokesperson and wanted relief. What should they have done instead? Their manner of address—their murmuring—was the problem. They should have approached the throne of grace to make known their need or want, asking God for help in a plaintive fashion rather than in a critical fashion. The spirit in which one implores for divine mercy is what matters.

**Comment:** It is good to express thankfulness for what God has already done.

**Reply:** Yes, the Israelites could have thanked God for supplying the manna and then expressed that they were in need of water. “We beseech thee for our need. May we please have some water.” Instead they were critical of God and of Moses as God’s spokesperson. Spiritually speaking, the Lord leads us the same way. He gives us traumatic experiences that we cannot understand. As with Israel, even though we do not know the reason for the experiences, how we accept them “proves” whether we really love God. His Word tells us that nothing can happen without His allowance. Therefore, there is a lesson to learn in every experience, and we should not complain or doubt the Father’s tender loving care—unless, of course, we have done something untoward.

God warned the Israelites in advance, at the beginning of their 40-year journey, that He would prove them. One reason for their delay in entering the Promised Land is that they did not trust Him. When ten spies brought back an unfavorable report, the Israelites were afraid to enter the land and thus did not obey. Similarly when we consecrated, God promised that we would suffer for righteousness’ sake. We were told in advance that He would test us as we took up our cross to follow Jesus.

“To do thee good at thy latter end.” God’s purpose for the Christian is to further bless, but on a higher plane and with something more substantive than material things. There is a crown at the end of the journey for those who are faithful. The more-than-overcomers will receive immortality and divine nature, they will reign as kings and priests, and they will get to live in the house Jesus has built for them. For natural Israel, the latter end for obedience to God’s commandments was the Promised Land with houses they did not build, filled granaries, etc.

**Deut. 8:17** And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

The improper emphasis was “my” and “mine”: “My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.” When the Israelites won battles with a people bigger and greater than they, it would be very easy for the flesh to say, “We won because of *our own* ingenuity, stratagem, and power.”

**Comment:** Not only was this Satan's attitude, but we are reminded of King Nebuchadnezzar, who was punished with seven years of insanity for pridefully glorying in his accomplishments.

**Comment:** Without need, there is no humility. When we need something, we go to the Lord.

**Reply:** Yes, there is a proper asking and an asking amiss. If we do not know whether our prayer request is proper, we say, "Thy will be done."

**Deut. 8:18** But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

**Deut. 8:19** And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

**Comment:** The Book of Judges tells of Israel's disobedience over and over. When punishment came, the duress they experienced brought them to their senses where they petitioned the Lord for help, which came in the form of a deliverer, a judge.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they fought enemies, so they were not able to till the soil, sow, and reap. But when they were victorious, the goodies were already there for them. As they conquered the land step by step, their experiences of miraculously conquering peoples who were greater and stronger were almost like miraculously receiving daily manna.

**Deut. 8:20** As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

When the Israelites were taken into periods of captivity, they more or less were brought to nothing, but they did not utterly perish as a nation because they came to their senses and were rescued by judges from time to time. They were temporarily brought to very humble servitude to heathen people.

When Jews, with their stiff-necked traits, are converted, they are exemplars of truth and righteousness. When the world observes Israel's conversion after Jacob's Trouble, the change will be so remarkable that anti-Semitic feelings will cease. Similarly, if a reprobate like John Bunyan is converted to Christ, we are amazed and give praise to God that His Spirit produced such a remarkable change in the individual. The same is true of the Jews. When the Holy Remnant are saved, their conversion will bring honor to God, showing that He knew what He was doing when He chose the house of Israel for the inauguration of the New Covenant.

**Q:** Please clarify the antitypical meaning of crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land. The end of the 40 years in the wilderness pictures the end of the Gospel Age, and "Jordan" is usually defined as "judged down," but what is the antitypical significance of the Israelites' crossing over Jordan? Does it picture a continued experience at the very end of the age or the spiritual change of the feet members? We ask this question because after the Israelites crossed the Jordan, they still had giants and battles to fight in the land.

**A:** We have been taught in the past that the Ark of the Covenant's being in the middle of the Jordan River represents the completion of the Church in death. Then the Israelites' entering into the Promised Land represents the Kingdom Age. However, the continuation of all the battles in the land creates a problem, which was not addressed by the Pastor, although his teaching would lead us to believe that the Church in the 40-year wilderness period represents

the experiences of the Church during the Gospel Age and that the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land represents their change. The subsequent experiences were considered the Kingdom Age, but that is as far as the Pastor developed the picture. We do think there will be problems and battles in the Kingdom Age, but that explanation is along spiritual lines, just as it is now with regard to the Christian.

The crossing of the nation of Israel through Jordan past the Ark of the Covenant, which was in midstream, represents the completion of the sin offering. Generally speaking, that is the usual and proper explanation. There are other pictures, but they have to be treated separately.

**Q:** If we take the fact that the Ark passed before the Israelites, the antitype has to be a Kingdom picture, but if we consider that they crossed over Jordan and continued on with battles, is there any possibility that, from another standpoint, it is a picture of the very end of the age, when there will be a separation? The feet members will have strong battles along the lines of the fallen angels, among other things. We are told to put on all the armor and, having done that, to stand. Whether we are put in prison or whatever our experience, we will still have battles to fight before, hopefully, getting our spiritual change. Therefore, could the Jordan represent a separation from the standpoint of what the feet members will experience while still on this side of the veil?

**A:** We are not prepared to go into that thought at this time. We do not like to publicly disclose our thinking until it is more crystallized and sharply defined, but the fact that the Ark was in midstream means the waters were rolled back and the curse of judgment, the condemnation of death, was stayed while the nation of Israel entered the land. All of the things that happened subsequently are not necessarily in the antitype. For example, the night of Passover, when the Israelites partook of the lamb and stood with their feet shod, being fully clothed and ready to depart, represents the entire Gospel Age. The picture ends with the partaking of the meal, even though after the meal, the Israelites went out by moonlight to Rameses, the starting point of the Exodus. From another standpoint, the Passover night, in which the meal was eaten, represents the 3 1/2 years of Jesus' ministry, and the subsequent seven-day Feast of Passover represents the Gospel Age. "Christ our passover is [has been] sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the [seven-day] feast [of Passover]" (1 Cor. 5:7,8). A third picture starts with the crossing of the Red Sea. Thus there are several complex pictures, each of which has definition with a beginning and an end. In other words, it is important to know where each picture should stop.

In summary, the crossing of the Jordan and the entering of the Promised Land are the entrance into the spiritual heavenly Canaan as far as the Church is concerned. The picture should stop there. With regard to continuing on, even though we have thoughts, we would rather wait and not expound further until the details clarify.

**Deut. 9:1** Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,

"Hear, O Israel" is a well-known statement to which the Jewish people attach considerable importance. No doubt when Moses addressed his people in this manner, the words were forcibly uttered.

"Thou art to pass over Jordan this day." The Israelites did not actually cross the Jordan River until three days later. The translators properly rendered the Hebrew word "this day," but sometimes, as here, expressions can have slightly different variations of meaning. Moses was saying in effect, "This time you will *really enter* the land"; that is, "Thou art to pass over Jordan *this time*." Thirty-eight years earlier, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land from the Negev desert on the west side of the Dead Sea, they were defeated in battle for



various reasons. This time the Lord meant business, and the Israelites would pass over Jordan.

“Thou art ... to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced [fortified] up to heaven.” In other words, the cities had high walls.

**Comment:** This language sounds like the unfavorable report of the ten spies except in this case the words were coming from the Lord through Moses (Deut. 1:28).

**Reply:** From a hyperbolic standpoint, there was truthfulness to the spies’ statement that the people were tall and strong and that the cities were fenced up to heaven. Figuratively speaking, that was the situation, but 38 years earlier the spies gave the report with *fear* and *trepidation*. Other than Caleb and Joshua, they did not have sufficient faith in the Lord.

Verse 1 also indicates that in ancient times, some of the cities were well constructed. We think of ourselves as being so advanced in civilization, but the ruins of a few cities testify to the fact that they were rather marvelous feats of accomplishment considering that the people did not have the construction implements that are available today.

**Comment:** The ancient city of Babylon is an example with its high walls that were wide enough for two large chariots to travel abreast.

**Deut. 9:2** A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!

Now Moses was talking about the people instead of the cities: “a people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest.” Anak had three notable children: Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi (Num. 13:22). Not only did the Israelites know of the Anakims by hearsay, but they had actually tried to enter the land in Hebron, the capital city, as it were, where the Anakims resided. Being children of the giants, they no doubt were somewhat comparable in size to Goliath (Deut. 2:10,11).

**Comment:** Moses was letting the Israelites know that victory would be solely because Jehovah was leading them in battle. They could not win in their own strength.

**Reply:** The principle is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). The Israelites were to be strong in their faith in the Lord.

Ultimately, the Israelites conquered all the children of the giants on the east side of the Dead Sea, especially the cities of Og and Sihon. But now they were to enter the Promised Land up near Jericho at the north end of the Dead Sea. Hebron was on the other side of Jordan but southward. In entering the land through Jericho, the Israelites would eventually fan out both northward and southward in conquering seven nations over a period of six years. Each of these nations was greater in number, as well as in size and strength, than the Israelites. However, God would go before them, and they would conquer these nations quickly. What a strong assurance!

**Deut. 9:3** Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

“Understand therefore this day [that is, this time], that the *LORD thy God* ... goeth over before thee; [even] as a consuming fire *he* shall destroy them, and *he* shall bring them down before thy

face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the *LORD* hath said unto thee [through the mouth of Moses].” The Israelites should have gone into the land earlier, but this time the Lord would see that the act was accomplished. One reason was that the unfaithful older generation had been destroyed in the wilderness. Now the younger generation, who had been purged of the other element, were about to enter the land. However, they still had certain inherited characteristics, which temporarily were kept under control, and the danger was that those family instincts and traits would surface eventually. Thus Moses was warning them.

**Deut. 9:4** Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the *LORD* thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the *LORD* hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the *LORD* doth drive them out from before thee.

**Deut. 9:5** Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the *LORD* thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the *LORD* sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Deut. 9:6** Understand therefore, that the *LORD* thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

Verses 4-6 repeat the thought that the Israelites would not get the land because of their own righteousness. Nor would they go in to possess the land because of “the uprightness” of the intent of their heart. Rather, God would expel the seven nations because of their wickedness. The principle is stated in Genesis 15:16 regarding the iniquity of the Amorites. In other words, the Israelites were not to enter the land until iniquity had come to the full. By saying the Israelites would not enter the land because of their righteousness, Moses inferred they were less wicked than the ones already in the land. It was time for the ouster of those peoples.

Moses emphasized that *GOD* would drive out the nations before the Israelites, and the method He would use to help the Israelites would be very dramatic. A visual manifestation of God’s power in a miraculous fashion would be seen in casting out the inhabitants. The Book of Joshua tells how this casting out was accomplished in a period of six years.

Two reasons for the Israelites to enter the land were (1) God’s promise to the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), that is, the Abrahamic Covenant, and (2) the wickedness of the inhabitants of the land.

The Israelites who were about to enter the land were a structured people who had been, to a considerable extent, purged of the element with a murmuring disposition, as proven by subsequent conduct. However, Moses was inferring that there was a genetic inheritance of the Israelites, as manifested by the older generation in their being stiff-necked and rebellious. A developed people, the current generation was still stiff-necked but not rebellious.

**Q:** Since the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites have a parallel for the Christian, what would be the parallel for verse 5?

**A:** The question is, Why would the Lord specially favor a people who appeared to have, in the eyes of the Gentiles, this characteristic of being stiff-necked, which can lead to both pride and stubbornness? The answer is that God is calling the same type of people in the Gospel Age. Therefore, natural Israel’s experiences, as narrated by Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, are intended to be lessons for the new creature.

**Comment:** Isaiah 64:6 states, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” The Israelites got into

the Promised Land not because of their righteousness but because of the covenant God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that covenant was based on faith. Similarly, Christians get into the antitypical Promised Land because of their faith, not through their own righteousness. In addition, just as the Israelites had great determination in fighting battles against their enemies, so Christians are to have the same attitude in fighting spiritual battles.

**Reply:** In other words, God is not calling wishy-washy people to the divine nature. While He calls primarily the poor and the humble of this world, He is calling a tough class who need chiseling. When rightly directed and instructed, that quality can be helpful. God will not give immortality to an unstable people. Jesus expressed the principle to Peter: “and when thou art converted...” (Luke 22:32). God wants a people who are gritty like sand and who have a measure of hardness.

*God's* repetition in verses 4-6 is not vain. One of our problems as Christians is to forget that we were nothing special in being called. If we do not keep the thought “not for thy righteousness” constantly in mind throughout our consecrated life on this side of the veil, it is quite likely we will not get the crown. The danger *for all of us*, not just for the few intellectuals, is in becoming high-minded when we get the truth. When we see bad traits in other people and the confusion of mind and the misunderstandings in the nominal Church, we are apt to feel superior, whereas we should examine ourselves. What a wonderful person Moses was to so earnestly beg the Israelites to always remember they were not chosen for their own righteousness! However, in spite of all that was said and done by God through His servants Moses and Joshua, the lesson of the history of the Jewish Age is that the Israelites *forgot* His works on their behalf. They forgot that *God* had called them and enabled them to grow in understanding and in knowledge.

When we look back and compare our condition before receiving the truth with our circumstance now, we know that a radical change has taken place. We know that we have been able to overcome several sins or faults, by the Lord's grace, and that they no longer seem to be a problem, yet other problems remain that will require a fight unto the end of our life. The inherent danger is forgetting. We are advanced in understanding, but having the mind of God is His gift to us rather than the result of anything we inherently possess. The thought of being better than another can subtly creep in, causing us to develop the wrong character and thus fail to make our calling and election sure. If we keep this important truth in mind, we are apt to make the Little Flock. We must take heed that the besetting sin does not overcome us and keep us from inheriting the promise.

**Comment:** At the First Advent, many of the scribes and Pharisees had a wrong heart condition. For example, when a publican went into the Temple and smote his chest and said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” a Pharisee said, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.... I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:10-13). As a result of being stiff-necked, the Pharisees manifested pride.

**Comment:** Moses kept hammering the point that everything that happened to the Israelites was what *the Lord* had done to or through them. “The LORD thy God” did this, and “the LORD thy God” did that—the LORD God had led them for 40 years.

**Reply:** The Book of Numbers gives the facts, the realities, of what occurred, and the Book of Deuteronomy provides the philosophy behind the realities—the lessons to be learned. For this reason, Deuteronomy is a very important book. It summarizes and encapsulates lessons to be gained from studying Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

**Deut. 9:7 Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in**

**the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.**

Moses was speaking to the living remnant, who had survived the wilderness wanderings. Here is a lesson for the Christian. In our development as new creatures, especially in younger years, we were puzzled by certain things that we did not give consent to, and as babes, as relative newcomers in the truth, we sometimes kept quiet when important issues were at stake. A common saying is, "Silence gives consent." The Israelites in the wilderness did not act with regard to the chief murmurers, who were destroyed; they did not take opposition except for one outstanding incident with the Levites. However, even in that incident, the people had to be encouraged to act. When Moses said, "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me," the whole tribe of Levi responded (Exod. 32:26-28). What is interesting—and is a separate study in itself—is that Aaron compromised to some extent, but the Levites had unusual traits.

In another picture, God said that He had brought the living remnant through the wilderness on eagles' wings. On the one hand, He complimented them, and on the other hand, He told them, like a father teaching a child, to remember they had the genetic trait, or family characteristic, of being stiff-necked. Thus there is the sunshine, and there is also the rain and cold when the Lord teaches His children. Incidentally, a parent should instruct a habitually disobedient child as to why he is being punished.

"Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day [or time] that thou didst depart out of ... Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD." The Israelites criticized God even before they crossed the Red Sea; that is, the rebellious trait was manifested when they saw they were hemmed in at the edge of the sea.

**Deut. 9:8** Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.

Verse 8 refers to the worship of the golden calf. The Israelites left Egypt, where the bull was worshipped, and in a short period of time made a golden calf for themselves. To furnish enough gold to make the idol, the women sacrificed by donating their gold earrings.

**Deut. 9:9** When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:

How outstanding that Moses neither ate bread nor drank water for 40 days and nights! He was laying the foundation for an argument he would pursue in order to press home a lesson.

**Comment:** The Lord miraculously sustained Moses during that long period of time, especially with the lack of water.

**Comment:** Here is another example of how Moses was like Jesus. In the wilderness following his baptism, Jesus also went 40 days and nights without food or water.

**Reply:** Yes, Moses was a type of Jesus in some incidents.

**Deut. 9:10** And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.

The Ten Commandments were expressed as briefly as possible. For instance, “Thou shalt not” was one Hebrew word, and the commandment itself was abbreviated, usually in one or two words. The commandments were written on both sides of two separate slabs of stone.

**Comment:** Exodus 32:15 reads, “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.” To write on both sides of each stone slab was practical because the tables were probably granite, which is heavy and thus could not be too large. Moreover, the tables had to fit inside the Ark of the Covenant, which had fixed, rather small dimensions, so writing on both sides of the slabs kept their size manageable.

**Reply:** The commandments were written large enough for anyone within six feet or so to read.

The commandments were “written with the finger of God.” In other words, they were miraculously done by God’s Spirit. Jesus said, “But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you” (Luke 11:20). The “finger” is like the scratch of a pen in comparison to God’s power, but of course to us, it is very powerful.

**Deut. 9:11** And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant.

At the conclusion of the 40 days and nights, God gave the two “tables of the covenant” to Moses. Instead of the word “covenant,” we usually say “testament,” as in the Old and the New Testaments. A little wisdom was used in selecting the word “testament,” for there is a certain nuance in the interpretation of that word, which can have three or four different applications depending on context. If the Bible had been called the “Old and New Covenants,” it would have been extremely difficult to explain that the Church is not developed under the New Covenant but is involved with its *mediation*; that is, the Church is part of the Mediator.

With the word “testament,” we think of a will and the necessity for the death of the testator in order for it to go into effect. Thank God that the Bible, as interpreted in the English language, is called “the Old and the New Testament”! Otherwise, as previously stated, we would have a problem in trying to say the Church is not now under the New Covenant. The proper thought is that the house of Israel will be under the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age (Heb. 8:8-11).

**Deut. 9:12** And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image.

Notice what God said to Moses, “Thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves.” They were “quickly turned aside out of the way.” The covenant was given 50 days (less than two months) after the Exodus. In making a “molten image,” the Israelites turned to a condition that was probably worse than what they had done in Egypt, for as far as we know, they never made an image of a god while under slavery. Thus at times, being busy can be better for one’s character than idleness.

**Comment:** We can imagine Moses’ emotional reaction to this announcement. He would have been disappointed.

**Reply:** As God’s agent, Moses had been shepherding the Israelites, and in spite of all his admonitions, ten disobedient acts were committed even before they got to Mount Sinai and

received the covenant.

Being “molten,” the image had to be cast in a mold. After the mold was made, rings, bracelets, etc., were melted so that liquid gold could be poured into the mold. Thus the golden calf was designed and made with care, and a little time was involved.

**Deut. 9:13 Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:**

God stated the outstanding characteristic of the nation of Israel—they were “a stiffnecked people.” Because of their appreciation of Moses’ role, they should have remembered this statement, and the remembrance should have kept them in a humble state of mind. We would expect some honesty on their part to admit this particular trait. However, if we were to call attention today to the fact that the Jews have a history of being a stiff-necked people, and if we did not mention that the God of Israel had so stated in the Word, they would think we were biased and anti-Semitic. Rather severe discipline is needed to bring them to a realization that this characteristic has existed and that they need to be penitent and look for forgiveness. The doctrine of repentance is lacking in the writings of Jewish scholars and rabbis, particularly in the religious literature. The Jewish people blame others for what has happened to them rather than looking inward.

Spiritually speaking, God calls a people who are not wishy-washy. In fact, they are gritty like sandpaper. Before we came into the truth, we needed to be softened so that we would be amenable to hearing the doctrine of our need for repentance. Through providences, God prepared us prior to consecration so that we felt our need and lack and became amenable to making a commitment to serve Christ, who was sent of God to be our Master and Lord.

**Deut. 9:14 Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.**

Notice that *God* spoke the words in verse 14. There is some truth here in the sense that Moses was the greatest individual who was alive in the Jewish nation at that time. Not only was he the meekest man in all the earth, but if he had had several like-minded progeny through heredity and genetics, there would probably have been a people more worthy than the nation of Israel. We are reminded that God did not call us because we were so great. He could have called others who are more noble by nature, birth, and natural characteristics, but He called us in order to humble the pride of those who are more noble and show that He can make people of lesser inherent value kings and priests over all the earth.

With Moses being a picture of Christ, the suggestion is that God presented this matter in Jesus’ hearing. He indicated His intention to produce a Kingdom, and the rescue of the human race involved the need for a ransom. Moses himself was willing to be blotted out of existence if doing so would result in the forgiveness of his own people and their being led to a Kingdom of blessing. What a noble characteristic Moses manifested—and Jesus is much greater than Moses! Thus we see Jesus’ willingness to come down here in spite of the risks that would be involved, for he could not fail in the least iota if he were to be a perfect ransom. However, Jesus could not have been a willing ransom unless God *first* called him and proffered the opportunity (Heb. 5:4,5). As the life of Moses is studied, we get a little insight into the inherent worthiness of the Master—even before he demonstrated that worthiness by dying a cruel death on the Cross.

**Deut. 9:15 So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.**

**Comment:** The mount burned with fire the entire time (40 days and nights) that Moses was up there, yet the fire did not stop the Israelites from sinning with the golden calf. The burning mount should have been an evidence to them of God's presence.

**Reply:** The people were so engrossed in their own sin and riotous behavior that they were oblivious to what was going on.

The two tables of the covenant were in Moses' two hands; that is, he took care that they would not be chipped or damaged by rubbing together. He was so respectful of the nature in which they had been incised that he carried the tables separately. The descent from Mount Sinai was treacherous back there. The carrying of the stones shows us that Moses was strong and agile. In fact, he ascended and descended that mountain several times.

**Comment:** The Scriptures indicate Moses' strength: "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7).

**Deut. 9:16** **And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.**

**Comment:** Again the account states that the Israelites turned aside quickly. Their sinning was not little by little; it did not take a long time.

A person with good eyesight who is trained can tell a molten image from a carved image. Of course we can reason that the image had to be molten because to get a slab of gold big enough to carve out a calf would necessitate a lot of wasted gold in the cutting-away process. However, Moses, with his sharpness of vision, drew this conclusion immediately.

**Deut. 9:17** **And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.**

Now, with no need for further carefulness in transport, Moses put his two hands together—as if they were one—and *smashed* the tables. Imagine Moses' *fury* in fracturing the two granite stones! Incidentally, granite has an adhesive molecular arrangement that makes it less susceptible to fracturing than stones such as slate.

**Comment:** Moses' breaking the stones before the people indicates that he knew what the commandments were, and they had broken the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exod. 20:3-5). The people broke the First Commandment before Moses could deliver the two tablets to them.

**Reply:** The smashing shows that Moses himself, spiritually speaking, had the Ten Commandments in his heart and very being, not just on the two stones. He manifested righteous indignation. This wrath was proper—it was to be commended rather than stifled. The Scriptures tell us to be "slow to wrath" and to be patient (James 1:19). Nevertheless, Moses' anger, from both a natural and a spiritual standpoint, was proper.

Moses said, "I ... brake them [the two tables] before your eyes." The people could probably hear Moses roar with anger as he came down the mount. Something he did caught their attention so that they stopped their riotous behavior and looked at him and got the full benefit of seeing him break the tables. The drama was not silent!

**Deut. 9:18** And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ... A time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:1,8). We need to be instructed to know when to love and when to hate; that is, we must love what *God* loves and hate what *He* hates.

“And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights.” In other words, Moses fasted on two occasions for a period of 40 days and nights. During this time, he neither ate bread nor drank water. (Jesus went without bread for 40 days, but there is no mention of his not drinking water.) Another point is interesting, although we have no explanation for it at present; namely, it appears that Moses, who fasted twice for 40 days, did more than Jesus, who fasted only once. However, during his ministry, Jesus did not have time to fast a second 40 days. There is probably a more important lesson or *spiritual* connotation here than just looking at the principle or viewing the fasting along natural lines. However, at the present time, we cannot fathom the spiritual connotation. We are careful not to be too quick to draw, or manufacture, pictures or types.

In the first instance of fasting, Moses was given a lot of instructions and minutiae on how to build the Tabernacle, as well as an explanation of the abbreviated Ten Commandments. When enlarged, the Ten Commandments occupied the Book of Leviticus, which explains the different offerings. The books of Exodus and Leviticus contain explanations and practical examples—just as in cases of law, a judge tries to establish guilt or innocence based on precedents. Similarly, in making decisions in our Christian walk, we look for examples in God’s Word for guidance and instruction. We look for a prior incident in our moral understanding of the Old or New Testament. It is often helpful to ask, “What would Jesus do?”

**Deut. 9:19** For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.

**Deut. 9:20** And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

The word “also” refers back to verses 8 and 9, “Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you. When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, ... then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water.” Moses reiterated what he had said about (1) God’s anger in regard to Israel’s worshipping the golden calf and (2) the two times he had prayed for 40 days particularly on behalf of the people. In verse 20, Moses included Aaron in God’s wrath and said he had prayed for him at the same time he had prayed for the nation.

**Comment:** Aaron should have taken to heart the privilege that was bestowed upon him in being used as a spokesman for the nation before Pharaoh. Therefore, he was accountable when he did not have the character and presence of mind to dispute with the people about building the molten calf.

**Comment:** Aaron was faithful in the final analysis, being called a “saint” of God. Although he disobeyed with regard to the molten calf, he rightly received the experience, for it became a stepping-stone to subsequent faithfulness on his part (Psa. 106:16). Similarly Mark, in the New Testament, was reprimanded for abandoning Paul on one of the missionary journeys, but he, too, came to his senses and was reinstated to favor.



**Reply:** Yes, Aaron was called a “saint.” However, because of what he did, even though he was forgiven, the priesthood of Ezekiel’s Temple will be identified with Zadok, not Aaron (Ezek. 40:46). The priesthood will be of the Levitical line but through Zadok. Aaron’s not entering into this equation in the prominent sense may be a form of retribution, but like the Apostle Paul, who also received retribution, Aaron was forgiven.

**Comment:** Zadok was faithful to David, and David (the “beloved”) represents Jesus.

**Deut. 9:21** And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

**Comment:** The account states that the golden calf was burned with fire, ground small, and cast into the brook. Exodus 32:20 adds the detail that Moses made the children of Israel drink of it.

**Reply:** Yes, and Moses must have been extremely angry, stamping and roaring in his fury, to go through these steps and then make the people drink the powdered calf. Certainly there is a time for righteous indignation, but those times are usually rare occasions.

**Comment:** Drinking powdered gold was an unpleasant experience for the people.

**Reply:** There is a medicinal value in drinking gold, but people who have done so on orders from their doctor have complained about the bitterness.

Not only did Moses burn and melt the calf with fire, but when it cooled, he probably had a way of smelting it down into very thin layers, or plates, which, when stamped and ground, became like dust. Meanwhile, the people witnessed his actions, which would have taken at least two hours. Then Moses ordered the people to drink the powder. How interesting it will be to see this incident replayed! The account gives us a little insight into the character of Moses as an example of one who properly performed the duties of leadership.

**Deut. 9:22** And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

**Deut. 9:23** Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

**Deut. 9:24** Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

Moses mentioned four prominent occasions but focused particularly on the one at Kadesh-barnea. There he summed up the character of the Israelites who had been eliminated by this time because of their rebellious spirit. At Kadesh-barnea, the Israelites did not enter the Promised Land as instructed but asked for and received permission to send spies into the land. When ten of the spies returned with an unfavorable report, the people listened to that report rather than to the favorable presentation from Joshua and Caleb. After being rebuked, they were ready to enter the land, but Moses said God did not want them to do so at that point. Nevertheless, the people rebelled and tried to enter the land. Right away, as a penalty for their presumption and disobedience, many Israelites were slaughtered. The lesson was that doing something right immediately after doing something wrong does not necessarily balance the situation. The Israelites had to wait for the Lord’s time and way.

**Comment:** The three place names in verse 22 where the Israelites provoked the Lord to wrath all seem to refer to temporal deprivations. Therefore, the lesson for the new creature is to try to refrain from complaining under similar conditions.

**Reply:** Yes. The Israelites were warned in advance that the purpose of their experiences was to prove them, yet when the trials came, they were surprised. They were proved by withholding or delaying what should have been done. As a whole, the Israelites failed.

**Deut. 9:25** Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the LORD had said he would destroy you.

Verse 25 mentions the second 40 days and nights when Moses fasted, neither eating nor drinking. There was probably not much time in between the two fasting periods—perhaps a month. We can see Moses' total absorption and zeal, as well as his forgetfulness of the needs of self in the interests of the welfare of the people he was leading. He took his stewardship very seriously. In a supreme fashion, that characteristic was manifested by Jesus throughout his ministry of 3 1/2 years.

**Comment:** What wonderful devotion on Moses' part! He could have washed his hands of the Israelites for their disobedience.

**Deut. 9:26** I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

It is somewhat amusing that Moses felt a confidentiality whereby he could discuss "person to person" with God and reason why He should be merciful and not destroy the people. A *little creature* down here on earth was talking and reasoning with *Almighty God*, the Emperor and Creator of the vast universe. However, Moses' attitude must have pleased the Heavenly Father, who said, "Come now, and let us reason together, ... though your sins be as scarlet, ... [I can make them] as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). As His little children, we can communicate with the Heavenly Father in prayer in a real sense. This Scripture gives us a feeling of assurance that He is listening when we reason with him. He takes cognizance of what we have to say; He has a hearing ear. How blessed we are to have been called!

**Q:** Was Moses saying, "Since you loved the Israelites so much that you saved them out of Egypt, you must still love them sufficiently now not to punish them to that extent"?

**A:** That was part of Moses' reasoning. His point was, "People will say you did great miracles to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt, but you were not able to get them into the wonderful Promised Land. If you destroy them, what will other nations think?" Moses was even willing to sacrifice himself if doing so would enhance the greater number of people. In an indirect fashion, this reasoning gives us an insight into Jesus' character and motivation as the Savior, for Moses pictured him. As Moses said, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). We are being shown what led Jesus to volunteer when God afforded the opportunity among the angels to come down here and die on the Cross to redeem mankind. These types are very beneficial for character development, let alone as admonitions.

**Deut. 9:27** Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

For Moses to make this statement shows that he had patience as a leader. He did not take to

heart all the criticisms, snubs, and snide remarks that were made during his ministry. He certainly remembered them but did not let them dampen his own personal ardor and zeal to be a successful deliverer of the people of Israel from Egypt, for God had appointed him as spokesperson for that purpose. From Moses, we get a wonderful lesson of the responsibility of stewardship and why God rewards those who are faithful in their ministry, even if it is not recognized and appreciated. Even when their ministry is minimized, their mission is not adversely affected because of the higher ulterior motives they innately possess. The Scriptures give us wonderful examples of what to do and what not to do, of what God likes to see in His people and what He does not like. Israel's stubbornness, wickedness, and sin were epitomized in making the golden calf, which they worshipped instead of God Himself. They wanted something materialistic in front of them, whereas the proper type of faith worships an invisible, unseen God and does not seek signs for everything.

**Comment:** Moses reminded God of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If God cut off that seed, He would not be keeping His own word.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the bottom line for verse 27.

**Deut. 9:28** Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

We smile as we think of this little creature, Moses, reminding God what to do and what not to do. The Lord tolerated this reasoning because He knew that Moses was a faithful servant with the right motives and heart intentions. God, whose very name is holy, the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, patiently listened to this tiny microbe down here speak and reason with Him. Isn't it marvelous that we can reason not only with each other but also with God and that He tolerates our reasoning and is pleased when He sees the sincerity, honesty, and pureness of idealism, even if the works of the flesh are sometimes quite obnoxious?

**Deut. 9:29** Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

Notice the words "thy" (three times), "thine," and "thou"—and not "my," "mine," and "I"—for it was *God* who did these things. Moses had the proper perspective. He realized that nothing was accomplished in his own genius or wisdom.

**Comment:** Moses' intelligence in developing this line of reasoning is amazing.

**Reply:** Being trained in all the wisdom of Egypt, he was the right man for what had to be done. Knowing whom He was choosing, God prepared Moses long in advance for his ministry. At age 40, Moses began to publicly expose his feelings as a Jew toward his own seed, Israel.

**Q:** Does this incident show the difference between the express will of God and the permissive will of God? God would never have done anything outside of His plans and purposes. With His offer to destroy the nation of Israel and to make of Moses a great nation, the promise would still have come through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now Moses brought God back to the entire plan. In our lives, it is the same. Sometimes a matter could be either this way or that way and still fall within the will of God, but we want the express will of God.

**A:** On different occasions, we have felt compelled to say that the very fact God chose the plan He did shows it is the best possible plan that could have been devised. The illustration has been given that the four attributes of God took counsel together, and all had suggestions. Then the

other three attributes concurred that they would follow what God's Wisdom said. Thus the plan that He chose was the best one to start with.

When God made these suggestions to Moses and also earlier in His dealings with Pharaoh when the Israelites came out of Egypt, He did not employ an underhanded method. Rather, the questions were designed to test Moses, Israel, and Pharaoh. However, God knew that the testings would have opposite reactions depending upon the character of those He was dealing with. He knew that mercy and forgiveness are sometimes looked upon by an enemy as a sign of weakness and inferiority—exactly the opposite of what we, by nature, would feel. When we see mercy, pity, and forgiveness manifested on behalf of either others or ourselves, we are often moved to tears. But for those with the wrong heart condition, the reaction is the opposite. In proffering the suggestion to Moses to make of him a great nation, God was testing him. The intention was not to damage Moses, for the ulterior motives were good.

Some people have strange ideas. For instance, many brethren feel that Rahab should not have lied with regard to the spies, yet Hebrews 11:31 honors her as one of the Ancient Worthies because she risked her life on behalf of the two messengers. It takes years to truly refine principles of right and wrong and to realize what is and what is not compromising.

**Comment:** The illustration has been used that there are laws which supersede other laws. For example, acceleration supersedes the general law of gravity. Similarly, the Lord's Word has general laws and rules, but under unusual circumstances, other laws supersede.

**Reply:** Yes, they supersede without violating the general rules because the general rules are still operative but just quiescent, as it were, to the superior rule in that instance.

**Deut. 10:1** At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.

Moses was to do two things: (1) hew two new tables of stone (like the first ones he smashed), and come up into the mount; and (2) make an ark of wood.

**Q:** Is this the Ark of the Covenant that Bezaleel made under Moses' instruction, the Ark that was then covered with gold?

**A:** Yes. Of course Moses was not to carry the Ark up into the mount, just the two tables of stone. In connection with the previous instructions on how the Tabernacle was to be made, the work was to continue down below by Bezaleel and Aholiab while Moses was up in the mount for another 40 days. In other words, the work was not to stop until Moses' return but was to proceed in his absence. And that is what has happened during the absence of Jesus. The preparation of the Ark has been going on during the Gospel Age while Jesus has been up on the "mount" (in heaven).

**Comment:** In Exodus 34:1,2, Moses was told to hew the two tables: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount." Apparently, it took several hours, or part of a day, for Moses to hew the stone tables. The next morning he was to go up into the mount. Moses must have had some skill in working with stone to be able to hew the tables.

**Reply:** Yes, Moses had both strength and skill. He had to know the strata where the rock would cleave and what stone to choose.

**Comment:** The second hewing of the tablets is a picture of The Christ in glory preparing the hearts of mankind for the rewriting of God's Law in their hearts.

**Deut. 10:2** And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

After Moses returned from the mount with the incised tables of stone, he was to put them in the Ark, which was designed to be the repository of the two tables of stone, plus Aaron's rod that budded and the golden pot of hidden manna.

God was responsible for writing the Law on the tables of stone. In principle, that writing is done during the Gospel Age, but the writing will be done in the hearts of the children of men in the Kingdom Age, when the New Covenant goes into effect.

**Deut. 10:3** And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand.

The two tables in verse 3 not only remind us of the Old and New Testaments, the two witnesses, but indicate that the principles and laws of the New Covenant will be very similar to those of the old Law Covenant. The difference is that Moses was the mediator of the old Law, and Christ will be the Mediator of the New Covenant. With power and authority, he will see that the New Covenant is successful and produces the results God has in mind.

Notice that *Moses* hewed the second set of tablets, whereas God hewed the first ones. Of course Moses represents Jesus. Just as Moses was the workman, so Christ will have an intimate role in the introduction of the New Covenant. Not only will he have a vital role as the Mediator, but as Administrator, he will be given some liberty in the functionality of the performance of the New Covenant.

As far as *Israel* is concerned, the first set of tablets has not yet been broken. The old Law Covenant is still binding upon natural Israel except for those *individuals* who died to the Law by accepting Christ. Stated another way, if a Jew changes covenant relationship by accepting Christ, then he is released from the bondage of the Law and is granted the freedom of the Sarah (or Grace) Covenant. Some people misunderstand Paul's statement that Jesus nailed the Law to the Cross. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14).

**Comment:** Since the old Law Covenant was not successful, the New Covenant is a *new* arrangement for writing the Law in the people's hearts.

**Reply:** The Law of justice will be met in the Kingdom Age. At that time, the people will be judged according to the works of that new Law, which will be similar to the old Law Covenant. The New Covenant is "new" *but not in principle*. The old Law Covenant should have been written in the hearts of the Jews as it is now being written in the hearts of the gospel Church under the Sarah Covenant. The *intent* of Christians must be to serve God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Through the robe of Christ's righteousness, God graciously enables us, under this new arrangement, to have communication, fellowship, and sonship with Jesus.

The scribes and the Pharisees obeyed the ceremonial aspect of the Law but not the character commandments. The true prophets criticized the priesthood and the kingship for their waywardness in not obeying the precepts of the Law.

**Deut. 10:4** And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

God wrote the Ten Commandments on the second set of tables.

**Deut. 10:5** And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me.

The second set of tablets was put in the Ark of the Covenant. A prevalent thought is that the Ark will be found, but the Scriptures say otherwise (Jer. 3:16). The new arrangement, or methodology, will be far more impressive than what occurred back in the type.

**Comment:** Verse 5 proves that the Ark had been made previously and was down below. Moses “made” the Ark in the sense that he gave the instructions to Bezaleel and Aholiab, who actually did the construction.

**Deut. 10:6** And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest’s office in his stead.

**Comment:** Numbers 20:27,28 reads, “And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.”

**Reply:** Yes, the Book of Numbers tells that Aaron died on Mount Hor, whereas verse 6 gives the name Mosera, which is at the base of the mountain.

**Comment:** According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, Mosera means “chastisement.” Numbers 20:24 indicates that Aaron died at Mount Hor and would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land as a chastisement because he had rebelled at the water of Meribah years earlier.

**Deut. 10:7** From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters.

We do not know the location of Jotbath, “a land of rivers of waters.” Presumably, because of the paucity of water in Sinai, the thought is “streamlets” of waters.

**Deut. 10:8** At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

**Deut. 10:9** Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him.

Why did Moses include the comment that God separated the tribe of Levi unto Himself and that the tribe of Levi would have no inheritance in the land?

**Comment:** When Moses descended the mount with the first set of tablets and saw the golden calf, he called out, “Who is on Jehovah’s side?” The Levites responded properly (Exod. 32:26).

**Reply:** Aaron’s dying on Mount Hor and not entering the Promised Land was a punishment.

As the Levitical high priest, he had been chosen to lead that tribe. While he disobeyed in not stopping the building of the golden calf, God did not forsake the continuum of the use of the tribe of Levi. Eventually, God, through Moses, appointed a successor, who was Eleazar, Aaron's son.

Although the Levites had no inheritance with their brethren, they were granted a little land (cities) as a residence. However, the implication is that these residences were of a *temporary* nature as an expediency for their support during the period of their ministry. In the final analysis, their inheritance will be spiritual, not temporal.

**Deut. 10:10** And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also, and the LORD would not destroy thee.

There were two 40-day periods in which Moses fasted while he communed with God on Mount Sinai. Our Lord's earthly ministry was preceded by a 40-day period similar to that when Moses received the first set of tables of the Law. The second 40-day period may have a spiritual parallel as well.

**Deut. 10:11** And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give unto them.

Verse 11 suggests that just as Moses was at the forefront in the Israelites' journey toward the Promised Land and the people followed behind, so Jesus did the same in his ministry and travels throughout Israel. He went before the disciples, and they followed him.

**Deut. 10:12** And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

**Deut. 10:13** To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Moses, like Paul, was somewhat mathematical. After Moses asked, "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee?" his answer was, "*Fear God, walk in His ways, love Him, serve Him with all your heart and soul, and keep His commandments.*" Here Moses was not rebuked for using the pronoun "I" because he was the spokesperson of God. Thus one can speak with confidence (with a "thus saith the LORD") if it is done with the right spirit, whereas Moses was out of line when he smote the rock and said, "Must we...." (Num. 20:10).

**Deut. 10:14** Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Even from a natural standpoint, it behooves us to seek, to know, and to love the Creator. Thus we have an inherent and tacit necessity for making a commitment to serve Him. The nation of Israel was duty-bound to serve God, not only because He gave the Law to them, His people, as a direct testimony but also because they were creatures of the earth.

**Comment:** "Heaven" is the starry heavens, and the heaven of heavens is where God dwells.

**Reply:** Yes, God is above the heavens that we can see.

**Comment:** During the time Moses was recording the Pentateuch, he was well aware of the

Genesis account and the promised blessing to Abraham regarding the stars of heaven.

**Reply:** He certainly knew about a coming Messiah. Many things happened that are not recorded, one of which may have been information about a spiritual reward for the Ancient Worthies.

**Deut. 10:15** Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

The “fathers” were either Jacob’s 12 sons or Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—plus “their seed after them.”

**Deut. 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

To “circumcise” was a continuation of the commandments “to fear,” “to walk,” “to love,” “to serve,” and “to keep.” Then came a negative commandment: “be no more stiffnecked.” Moses’ endurance in such lengthy speaking is almost unbelievable, and he kept one theme constantly in mind, even though he sidetracked occasionally. That theme was “to obey is better than sacrifice,” and he told what constituted obedience, that is, how to obey.

**Q:** Was Moses’ point that without circumcision, the Israelites were considered unclean, but the symbol alone was not enough? In order to be truly clean, their hearts had to be circumcised.

**A:** Yes. Moses used blunt, to-the-point language that is almost self-explanatory. Spiritually speaking from a male standpoint, “circumcision” is a definitive term indicating *consecration*. In Scripture, the male usually includes the female, and sometimes the female includes the male. For example, Christians are likened both to “sons” of God and to a “bride.”

**Deut. 10:17** For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

“Terrible” means awesome. The poetic rhythm of verse 17 reminds us of the Hallelujah chorus in Handel’s “Messiah.”

God takes no bribes. Flattery is a foolish bribe, but when one exults from the heart as Moses did here, being inherently spontaneous, the words are meritorious. It is easy to talk, but the words must be meaningful.

**Comment:** Bribes pervert judgment.

**Reply:** Temptations sometimes come to judges in the form of private proffers. To maintain the integrity of the office, a judge must refuse such temptations.

**Comment:** Some pray, “God, if you are pleased to do such and such, then I will do such and such.”

**Reply:** Yes, the reception of benefits is predicated upon what the petitioner is about to do. Of course there are circumstances of deep grief and trauma where we may render up to God a wrenching prayer that if He will do something to deliver us from a certain situation, then we will serve Him more completely. In that case, the prayer would not be considered a bribe.

**Deut. 10:18** He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.



**Comment:** The Law provided for orphans, widows, and strangers.

**Reply:** One is to inhibit and expunge the tendency of the fallen, depraved human nature to take advantage of individuals in these three categories.

**Comment:** To the extent that it was conscientiously followed, the Law prepared the Jews for the Kingdom Age.

**Reply:** Down through the Gospel Age, both natural and spiritual Israel have been given special training so that those who are selected for office (Little Flock, Holy Remnant, etc.) will have the right combination of mercy and tenderness on behalf of the needful of mankind.

**Deut. 10:19** Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

**Comment:** The experience in Egypt should have made the Israelites sympathetic to strangers.

**Comment:** This early example of being sympathetic high priests was carried into the Christian age.

**Reply:** The teachings of Deuteronomy can easily be spiritualized to edify the Christian. Moses repeated himself time after time, but the repetition was needful because what he was saying is contrary to fallen human nature. In other words, the repetition was not vain.

**Deut. 10:20** Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

The word “cleave” is rather touching, for it reminds us of a child who runs to a parent for sympathy and consolation and thus has emotional appeal.

**Q:** What did Moses mean when he said to “swear” by God’s name?

**A:** There are two kinds of swearing: (1) legal swearing, that is, taking an oath to tell the truth, and (2) using God’s name over and over in everyday language in terms like “God bless you.” The latter form of “swearing,” which becomes meaningless because of repetition, constitutes taking the Lord’s name in vain and bringing it down to a common standard. “God bless you” should be a sober and sincere expression—simple, honest, and to the point.

**Deut. 10:21** He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

Moses had the right attitude in all of these experiences. Not merely was he the spokesperson for God to the people of Israel, but also his heart and soul were in his ministry, as proven by the words he used in his commentary. He was learning the proper lesson and now wanted the nation to see matters in the right perspective.

**Deut. 10:22** Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

At this point in their history, the Israelites had witnessed 40 years of schooling. Two million adults had left Egypt, and 2 million of a new generation entered the Promised Land. Of the preceding generation, only Joshua, Caleb, Eleazar, and Ithamar survived to that point.

Genesis is more like a history of great events that happened in the past, and Leviticus contains laws. However, as Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (a rehearsal) are read again and again, we realize that the Lord will be doing the same types of things in the Kingdom Age, that is, things that can be *witnessed*. For example, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram. Fire came down and destroyed Korah and those assembled with him. God spoke to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Could there be anything more dramatic in the Kingdom Age than these events, which the Israelites actually saw and heard? When similar events are repeated, those who forget and do not obey will reap a destiny of Second Death. If so many back there in the wilderness forgot what God had done on their behalf, a generation in the Kingdom Age can also forget what is seen and done when Christ is reigning; that is, they will not retain the lesson. Those who go up against the camp of the saints at the end of the Kingdom Age, being misled by Satan, will be in number like the sand of the sea (Rev. 20:8,9). In other words, many will forget even in the Kingdom Age, and for them, there will be no excuse. Having witnessed the better Mediator, the real Christ who died on the Cross, and having observed the results of his reign, they will incur full responsibility for willful disobedience. Such individuals, who are inherently incorrigibly wicked, will be exposed. The purpose of the Little Season is that God will not destroy anyone without letting us see the reason why. He could have secretly eliminated all of the impurities, but instead He wants us to see His love, pity, and sympathy and the reasons He destroys and obliterates some people. He allows us to see so that we may *know* Him. If God simply judged according to His perfect knowledge, we would not be able to have the love for Him that He desires us to render.

Thus there is a reason and a purpose for what has happened to mankind. The temporary permission of evil is the best plan that could have been devised. Never again will the permission of evil be repeated. Once over, it will be like a watch in the night when compared with eternity. Wisdom is the last attribute of God that will be appreciated. His Love, Justice, and Power will be manifested earlier, but Wisdom will not be seen until His plan is complete.

Verse 22 uses the expression “stars of heaven” rather than “sand of the seashore” because a natural figurative application is intended. The Abrahamic promise contains both a natural and a spiritual application.

**Comment:** God made Israel “as the stars of heaven for multitude.” Here is an example of why we need to look at the context when this term is used. In verse 22, the “stars of heaven” referred to 2 million adults, whereas elsewhere the number intended is much higher.

**Reply:** The children of Sarah and the implied Sarah Covenant will far exceed those of Hagar. At present, the Muslim seed far outnumbers the Jews, the natural seed. Therefore, from the natural standpoint, the promise seems to be a contradiction, but from the spiritual standpoint, those who are born of the Sarah Covenant, the spiritual seed, are the Little Flock. The implication is that after the Kingdom Age is over and in the world without end, the Little Flock will be involved in the begetting of new life in other solar systems. With this development, the children of the Sarah Covenant not only will greatly outnumber the natural seed down here but will be given the privilege of creating life through the Savior. Of course Jesus is the Head, but the Church, as his Bride, will be the mother in populating the galaxies, always recognizing the headship of Christ. That type of populating is a lot different than giving immortality. Only the Creator Himself can grant immortality to others. Stated another way—if we understand the Scriptures correctly—those who have immortality cannot give it to others. In summary, the multiplying of the stars of heaven in the spiritual sense is related to the Sarah Covenant.

**Comment:** In Genesis 15:5, God told Abraham, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”

**Deut. 11:1** Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always.

**Comment:** To love God means to keep His charge, statutes, judgments, and commandments always.

**Q:** What are the distinctions between these four categories?

**A:** For “charge,” other translations have “mandate,” “requirements,” and “observations.” The other three words—“statutes,” “judgments,” and “commandments” (or “commands”)—are accurate and remain the same.

**Q:** In a practical sense, how would we differentiate these four words?

**A:** Under the Law, there is a difference between the moral and the ceremonial commandments, the latter pertaining to the offerings and the proper performance of the ceremony on certain feast days. In addition, there were laws of general commerce and matters of everyday life in the Israelites’ agrarian society. And there were animal ordinances, such as not unequally yoking an ass and an ox. Thus moral, ceremonial, and everyday-life commandments are more or less three practical avenues of application with “charge” or “mandate” being uncertain.

**Comment:** Dictionary definitions are that “statutes” are laws by legislation and “judgments” are opinions of the courts, that is, verdicts. “Commandments” would be the Ten Commandments.

**Deut. 11:2** And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm,

**Comment:** The children at the beginning of the Exodus, who witnessed the miracle of the Red Sea opening, were now adults. The children of these adults had not seen the miracles.

**Reply:** Yes, although those who were born in the wilderness saw some of the miracles. The Israelites were in Egypt for 215 years and in the wilderness for 40 years. Moses was now speaking very close to the end of the 40 years. However, these verses seem to concentrate particularly on the deliverance phase of the Israelites’ experience in Egypt.

God’s “greatness” could be His largesse, mercy, and patience. These qualities of Jehovah in dealing with His people not only show Him to be a great God but also elicit praise and happiness on our part. If God had almighty power without the characteristics of love, mercy, pity, and kindness, we would obey Him more from the standpoint of fear rather than out of inward compulsion. Because our God is so wonderful, our obedience is spontaneous.

What is the difference between a “mighty hand” and a “stretched out arm”? God has a mighty hand, but a stretched-out arm implies *action*. A stretched-out arm manifests power but power in a *very, very awesome fashion* on behalf of His people.

**Deut. 11:3** And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land;

God’s “miracles” were the strange and peculiar plagues inflicted upon Egypt, particularly the last seven, which came only on the Egyptians. Spiritually speaking, they were a curse to the Egyptians but a mighty blessing to the Jews, who were delivered as a result. That statement is also true in principle for the Christian today in contrast to the people of the world.

**Deut. 11:4** And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day;

**Comment:** Mention of the water of the Red Sea *overflowing* the pursuing Egyptians indicates the degree of the miracle. The Israelites did not cross on a sandbar but where the water was *deep*.

After the Red Sea overflowed the Egyptians, there was no further pursuit of the Israelites. Thus “the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day,” that is, up to the time the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land.

**Deut. 11:5** And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place;

God also performed mighty acts during the 40 years in the wilderness.

**Deut. 11:6** And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel:

The event of Korah’s rebellion gives a powerful lesson in regard to the Kingdom. On the very *next day* after the earth swallowed up (opened its mouth and closed upon) not only Dathan and Abiram but also their families, cattle, and goods, the Israelites criticized and murmured against Moses. What more can Jesus do in the Kingdom Age when he rules with a rod of iron? The murmuring shows that people who do not have a heart of righteousness and an affection for that which is right will soon forget, no matter what is done. Thus miracles alone do not have a lasting effect on the moral character of an individual *unless he is righteously inclined*. To such individuals, the lesson sinks deep. While the incorrigible, those of a wicked disposition, may be impressed when an outstanding event happens, it is not long afterwards that they forget—even in the Kingdom Age. From the account of Korah’s rebellion, we see that a great number of people will be cut off in the Kingdom. At least they will be given the opportunity for life, but in reality, the opportunity will not effectually change them. Of course they will receive some judgment for what they did in the current life, especially if their actions injured others.

**Deut. 11:7** But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did.

From a broad-brush standpoint, in a practical sense, all of the Israelites saw with their eyes “all the great acts of the LORD.” Of course those who were born in the wilderness, a minority, did not see all of the acts, but generally speaking, the people did. In Scripture, the word “all” is often used in a modified sense to mean “generally all,” not “literally all.”

**Deut. 11:8** Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;

**Comment:** The Israelites’ strength was predicated upon obedience.

Notice the pronoun “I.” Moses could properly say, “I command you,” and God made an allowance because the words were spoken in a constructive sense. Moses’ advice was perfect and exactly what the Lord wanted. In other words, the statement was not made in the attitude of “Must we smite the rock?”

Paul occasionally used a similarly strong manner of words, but throughout his epistles, he was careful to give honor first to God and then to Jesus before he gave instruction. Therefore, when

Paul spoke without specifically mentioning God and Jesus, he was in such thorough agreement with them that he was a proper spokesman. He could speak with authority as a trumpet because his instruction was so much in harmony with what God's Word wishes us to do. To give honor to the Father and the Son were a part of Paul's very disposition. Thus God makes an allowance for enthusiasm and sometimes for strong talk.

"That ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land." Moses was like a general talking to his army. Although Alexander the Great was a young man when he commanded his army, those under him obeyed heartily because of the example he set. His *personal* bravery and courage were manifested so often that when he issued instructions, his subordinates not only readily obeyed but were strengthened. Here Moses was saying to the Israelites, "If you properly hearken to my words, the result will be a strengthening of your inward character."

**Deut. 11:9** And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

**Comment:** Under the Law, long life was promised for obedience.

**Reply:** Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The new creature's receiving spiritual blessings for obedience is similar in principle to what the Israelites got from a material standpoint.

Israel was "a land that floweth with milk and honey." When Mark Twain visited Israel, he said it was a most depressing, impoverished, barren, unfruitful land. He was shocked by the reality versus what he had expected to see. However, a strange thing happens in Israel, even in the desert. With the use of just a little water, great fruitfulness comes out of the barren land. Once irrigation is used, the results are startling. Of course, as verse 9 indicates, the land was fruitful back in the days when the Israelites entered. After the desolations that occurred years later, the land became a sorry sight and no longer looked like a land of promise from a natural standpoint until the twentieth century. Now the land is again very fruitful.

**Comment:** A proof of the fruitfulness of the land back there is that the 12 spies brought back a huge cluster of grapes.

"Milk" suggests plenty of verdure to support cattle, and not merely sheep and goats. "Honey" suggests an abundance of bees. Honey was excellent for food but not for sacrifice, for it pictures flattery, which is unbecoming in prayer and ceremonial worship (Lev. 2:11).

**Deut. 11:10** For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:

The land along the river Nile is very fertile. The Blue and the White Nile, the upper reaches, which are the source of the Nile, bring down rich soil, or silt, that is extremely nutritious for the growth of agricultural products.

In Egypt, the Israelites "sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot." Even today the land in Egypt is watered with a shadoof, which is a means of lifting water from the Nile to higher ground with a tread wheel or pump-type arrangement, whereby a small bucket is swiveled around and its contents emptied into irrigation ditches. Silt has been deposited for thousands of years when the Nile flooded, making the banks of the Nile so high in places that the people have had to labor to get water to go into the ditches. Thus the land in Egypt was fertile once water reached it, but considerable labor was required to get water up to the level where it

would go into the irrigation ditches.

**Deut. 11:11** But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

**Deut. 11:12** A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

Verses 11 and 12 show God's watch-care over natural Israel. When this message is spiritualized, it is very comforting to see God's providence over His Church. While He is with us here, in the land of our pilgrimage, and the same principles apply beyond the veil, we can see that if He cared for natural Israel along these lines, how much more He cares for the elect Church.

**Comment:** In Egypt, the Israelites watered the land themselves, but in Israel, God gave the rain.

**Reply:** Yes, He provided all their needs. For us, the principle is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added [or granted] unto you [as He sees that they will be used in an appropriate way]" (Matt. 6:33). Watch-care is over each Christian, and blessings of rain are from above, from the Father. Every good and great gift originates from the "Father of lights" (James 1:17).

**Comment:** There is a contrast between Egypt and the Promised Land. "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills" (Deut. 8:7). To grow crops in Egypt, the people had to irrigate from the Nile, whereas Israel was a land of streams and brooks (plural).

**Reply:** Egypt is very flat in the delta area, and in Upper Egypt, the land on both sides of the Nile is flat for about two miles, generally speaking. There are plenty of hills and valleys in Egypt, but they are not occupied because of their distance from the Nile.

**Comment:** The expression "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" was from March or April to September or October, which corresponded with the early rain and the latter rain.

**Reply:** Yes. With us, "the eyes of the LORD thy God," His providence, is with us from the beginning of the day unto the end of the day throughout the year.

**Deut. 11:13** And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

**Deut. 11:14** That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

The rains brought corn, wine, and oil to natural Israel. Spiritually speaking, "rain" is the truth, which brings the fruits of the Spirit; "wine" is joy; "corn" (or wheat) is the sustenance of our daily manna; and "oil" is the unction of the Holy Spirit, the assuaging benefaction that comes from oil.

Wine can also be considered from a future standpoint. At the institution of the emblems with his disciples, Jesus said he would observe the Memorial in the Kingdom as a remembrance, and on that occasion, instead of the observance being a precursor of his death, it would be exactly the opposite—a harbinger of eternal happiness and joy with him. Jesus said he would drink the

wine anew with the disciples in the spirit realm.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32). Jesus’ words correspond with the spiritual application here in Deuteronomy.

**Reply:** Yes, when we study this book, it is easy to apply many of the same principles to spiritual Israel, to the New Creation.

The first and the latter rains in Israel were necessary for prosperous crops. All of the blessings that Moses expressed were conditional upon the nation’s obedience and loving God with all of their heart and soul. Of course there are always exceptions, but generally speaking, if the Israelites were obedient to the Lord, they received blessings they could scarcely contain. When figuratively applied to the gospel Church, the “first rain” is the truth that was available in the days of the apostles. The “latter rain” is the truth that is available during the Harvest period at the end of the age.

**Comment:** A prophecy in Joel 2:19 promises corn, wine, and oil to Israel following the deliverance of the Holy Remnant. “Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen.”

**Reply:** When the Kingdom is established, there will be a grand feast down here for all people, and we can be sure that the feast will have a counterpart in heaven. Great will be the rejoicing that at last the promised Kingdom Age has been introduced.

**Deut. 11:15** And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

**Comment:** Verse 9 promised “a land that floweth with milk and honey.” To have milk, the Israelites needed rain so that grass would grow for the cows to eat.

**Deut. 11:16** Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;

Natural Israel turned aside to worship Ashtoreth, Molech, Baal, and other gods. The lesson to Christians is not to have any idols that would distract from consecration. Examples are money, music, influence, and sports.

**Deut. 11:17** And then the LORD’S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Spiritually speaking, if we displease the Lord and/or wander into other paths, we may feel that our prayers are not ascending to God. A feeling of isolation occurs, and depression may result.

**Comment:** When King Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple, he referred to this principle about rain being withheld for disobedience. “When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance” (1 Kings 8:35,36). Certainly this principle was known in Israel, so when the

nation suffered drought, the people should have quickly turned their hearts to the Lord.

**Reply:** With regard to disobedience, heaven was likened to “iron” and the earth to “brass,” figuratively speaking. “And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass” (Lev. 26:19). “Brass” implies heat, that is, no moisture.

**Comment:** Rain is needed for all crops. In our lives as Christians, the “rain” can represent our spiritual hope. Without that hope, we are destitute.

**Reply:** As Jesus said in Matthew 6:23, if a Christian does not awaken out of a situation of disobedience, how great is that darkness! It is startling to realize how great the darkness became with certain individuals who were wondrously advanced in truth in the early part of the Harvest. The darkness is astounding because they were brilliant, zealous, and helpful to the brotherhood, but when they became blind, some of their utterances, actions, and teachings were almost like madness. How dependent we are on God for His mercy and forgiveness and the supplying of our needs!

**Deut. 11:18** Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

In antitype, we have daily heavenly manna, as well as pictures and Scriptures on the walls of our homes, to remind us of the truth. When we travel, our fellowship is, hopefully, along spiritual lines for the most part. Thinking day and night on God and His Word is the characteristic of His people in the Gospel Age, as it was among the faithful of the Jewish Age. Those who were obedient hearkened to Moses’ instruction.

**Comment:** Verse 18 is probably one Scripture that Orthodox Jews use to authorize putting phylacteries containing Scriptures on their arms or around their heads, and mezuzahs are placed on the doorposts of their houses.

**Reply:** Yes, and we also have cross and crown pins. All of these are helpful to us and to others as long as they are used with the proper heart attitude and not in a “show-off” manner.

**Deut. 11:19** And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

**Deut. 11:20** And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

If we bind these words in our heart, soul, and mind, as well as upon our hands and forehead, the benefaction will be not only to ourselves, spiritually speaking, but also to our children and those who are under our influence.

**Comment:** The Christian is to study the Scriptures daily to show himself approved and to teach his children (2 Tim. 2:15).

**Deut. 11:21** That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

The expression “that your days may be multiplied ... as the days of heaven upon the earth” is similar to Paul’s saying we should “walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). In other words, from a spiritual standpoint, the glorious future hope should cause us to walk as though we were in the



Kingdom Age and children of the future day. We should walk as in daylight, for evil is usually done in darkness. Such dual applications are helpful. We need to be constantly reminded lest we start to drift off. As Paul said, “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1). Generally speaking, one does not go suddenly out of the truth but lets things “slip” through a gradual benumbing and darkening. It is good the slipping is usually gradual, for it can be nipped in the bud when we become aware of its progression to a certain extent in our life. If the fall were from light to sudden darkness, there would be no hope for recovery. We can never be so confident in the present life that we put off our armor, nor can we consider ourselves to be so advanced and crystallized in Christlikeness and character that we do not have to worry (1 Kings 20:11). In fact, if such thinking is entertained, that is when we should start to worry.

**Comment:** In regard to the contrast between light and darkness, butterflies fly in the daytime, and moths fly at night.

**Reply:** There is also a favorable aspect in viewing both insects. Originally, we were like the moth, which is attracted to the light, the truth. When we die as a moth, we hope to be changed into a butterfly. Moreover, some insects are killed when they are attracted to the light. The heat is so intense that it destroys them. Accordingly, we want our old-nature disposition to be consumed so that the metamorphosis will take place.

Along another line, there is a lesson with breast-feeding. By nature, a babe can feed from his mother’s breast for a considerable length of time. In olden times, the practice was followed for several years, whereas now a baby is breast-fed for only a couple of months to a year. As discovered by a physicist back in the sixteenth century, the miracle is that only a babe can suck milk out of the mother’s breast, for a baby’s mouth has a complete vacuum that is lacking in an adult. Only a partial vacuum is produced when an adult sucks juice from an orange, for example. Just as the phenomenon is peculiar to a babe, so the Scriptures say, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The more mature Christian wants not just the milk but the meat of the Word, which is more substantial. The same principle operates according to both natural and spiritual laws.

“That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children.” Spiritually speaking, if we are faithful in our covenant with God, our days will be multiplied, especially in the spiritual realm. We hope to be partakers of the divine nature and immortality, and if we are obedient, our days will be multiplied—without end! Even the Great Company class will get everlasting life.

**Deut. 11:22** For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

**Deut. 11:23** Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.

**Deut. 11:24** Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.

**Deut. 11:25** There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

The advice to the New Creation is to “resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

The same principle is enunciated here. Natural Israel was to drive out seven nations—the Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites (Deut. 7:1).

“Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours.” This principle operates with the new creature in regard to faith and obedience. Each step is initiated with faith and completed by obedience. As we obey the principles of divine government in our lives, we make progress, but we have to take steps voluntarily. The Lord wants us to act rather than to need prodding from behind. Of course He prods us when we need a lesson, but it is better to take steps of our own volition and desire if we want to please the Heavenly Father and Jesus.

“Ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.” In fact, the Israelites possessed a “land of giants,” and that is the experience we have (Deut. 3:13). Satan is the leading “giant,” and the fallen angels are other “giants.” We fight “not against flesh and blood [only], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

The “uttermost sea” is the Mediterranean. The land is described from south to due north (from the Negev desert to the northernmost point of Lebanon), and from northeast to west (from the river Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea). Other places in Scripture enlarge and pinpoint the boundaries to a considerable extent, giving hills, rivers, and hamlets that identify in specific detail the future boundaries of Israel.

**Deut. 11:26** Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

**Deut. 11:27** A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

**Deut. 11:28** And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

**Deut. 11:29** And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.

“Thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.” Today Mount Gerizim is called the Mount of Blessing, and Ebal is known as the Mount of Cursing. The Levitical priesthood was divided into two companies. To impress the lessons on the people, who were assembled down below, one company sang the blessings like a psaltery, and the other company sang the curses.

Depending on whether a Jew is Ashkenazi or Sephardi, Mount Ebal differs in pronunciation. One segment pronounces the mount as “Eve’-oll,” so we can see how the word “evil” was used in English. That branch of Jewry cannot pronounce the “b” sound, so instead says “v.”

**Comment:** A memory assist is to use the first letter of each mount: Gerizim is good (*blessings*), and Ebal is evil (*curses*).

**Comment:** The reading of the blessings and the cursings when the Israelites entered the land under Joshua is recorded as follows:

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal,

“As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

“And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

“And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

“And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.” (Josh. 8:30-35)

**Reply:** Yes, that reading took place later. Moses was now telling the Israelites what to do when they entered the land and particularly up in the area of mounts Gerizim and Ebal.

**Comment:** Additional instructions were given by Moses, as follows:

“And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster:

“And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

“Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster.

“And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

“Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:

“And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

“And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.

“And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

“Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

“And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

“These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:

“And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.” (Deut. 27:2-13)

**Reply:** Originally, the altar was built on the top of Mount Ebal, but subsequently in Jewish history, Mount Ebal was no longer recognized in the sense of observance because, through Israel’s disobedience, it was proven to be a mountain of cursing. Therefore, an altar was built on Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing. Today remnants of that altar can still be seen.

The Samaritans made Mount Gerizim their headquarters as though it were Jerusalem. Thus the Samaritans revered Mount Gerizim, and the Israelites revered the mount in Jerusalem. Another comparison occurred in the days of Jeroboam I, who made Dan and Beth-el rival places of worship to detract from Jerusalem.

**Comment:** Moses said at the *end* of the 40 years in the wilderness, “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse,” and the Israelites had said at the *beginning* of the 40 years, “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do” (Exod. 24:3). Therefore, Moses did not set forth the blessings and the curses until after the promise, or commitment, had been made. From then on, there were conditions and requirements for fulfilling that commitment. The same principle applies to one who makes a vow of consecration in the Gospel Age.

**Reply:** Yes, the formal introduction of the Law was given at Mount Sinai, and now, 40 years later, as the spokesman of God, Moses was reviewing different aspects of the Law, especially the character elements, in the Book of Deuteronomy lest the Israelites forget.

**Q:** Did all of Moses’ statements in the Book of Deuteronomy take place in one day?

**A:** That is true of most of the book. What he said was done in two segments on the same day.

**Deut. 11:30** Are they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh?

The word “champaign” (*arabah* in the Hebrew) signifies a flat land, a wadi, that is dry most of the year. Usually once a year in Sinai (and approximately once every 45 years in Egypt), an inch or two of rain falls and races like an express train down the dry wadis.

Moses was speaking as though he were familiar with the land of Israel, which he had never entered. “Are they [mounts Gerizim and Ebal] not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down [that is, on the west]?” The Canaanites were so numerous and occupied so much of Israel that the land is sometimes called Canaan. The word “Canaanites” comes from the name Canaan, a son of Ham. Similarly, Egypt is called “the land of Ham.”

**Deut. 11:31** For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein.

“For ye shall pass over Jordan.” Of course there was no bridge for crossing the river. At certain times of the year, the water level of the Jordan River was so low that it was like a good-sized brook. At other times, the river was at flood stage. Moses was saying, in effect, that although there was no bridge over the Red Sea, the Lord opened up a path for the Israelites to cross, and He would do likewise with the Jordan. “Ye *shall* pass over Jordan”—the crossing would happen! It is interesting to see the faith that was residual, or embedded, in Moses’ character. He drank God’s Word so deeply that it became like a part of him.

Moses was saying, “Ye shall pass over Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you. Seven nations occupy the land, and any one of them is greater than you are, but God said you will enter the land and possess it and dwell therein.” Although these were God’s words, they were a part of Moses now. And this is what God is doing with His spiritual Church, with those He is calling during the Gospel Age. Like Moses in the type and Jesus in the antitype, we should have God’s Word so instilled in us that it is a part of our being.

**Deut. 11:32** And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.

This verse is self-explanatory.

**Deut. 12:1** These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

**Deut. 12:2** Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

**Deut. 12:3** And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

In antitype, we are supposed to utterly destroy our spiritual enemies. Because we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, this is hard for fallen flesh to do, but God wants us to be victorious so that we will graduate from this condition and sin will lose its enticement, or attractive power. Thus far in the Harvest, our battle has been mainly against the fallen flesh, for we have not had the persecutions of the past. The foes of the flesh are quite strong because they are in the body members we were born with. God is looking for those who are successful in attaining the highest degree of overcoming that is possible in the fallen flesh. Although we cannot overcome perfectly in the present life, God can make the distinction as to whether we graduate with high marks or just get diplomas. He will know if, given a perfect body, we could be trusted with immortality. Therefore, we must be like Job, who made a covenant with God with his eyes. “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). In other words, Job had a repugnance for evil. Evil must become more and more obnoxious to us as new creatures. If we develop this characteristic to the greatest degree possible in our fallen members to satisfy God, He will give us immortality. Thus God is looking for character development more than knowledge per se, but it is very difficult to get a higher degree of character development without knowledge. Otherwise, we are trying to accomplish something with a dull ax. The edge of the ax has to be sharpened in order to be effective in cutting down trees of evil and opposition.

“Ye shall *utterly* destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their

gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree.” The tendency was to put heathen altars on the top of mountains and usually under a tree. At that time, Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey, had many more trees than at present. The mountains were not high enough for the trees to cease above a certain altitude, i.e., above the timberline.

“Ye shall *overthrow* their altars, and *break* their pillars, and *burn* their groves with fire; and ye shall *hew down* the graven images of their gods, and *destroy* the names of them out of that place.” The tendency was to salvage parts of the altar, such as the stones, and to spare the trees, but they were to be overthrown and burned, respectively. And the Christian is to do likewise, rooting out what displeases the Lord. We fight a battle—the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

**Comment:** The whole plate has to be clean and without compromising on principle for the sake of fellowship. We should not rationalize what God disapproves by saying, “We are all brethren in Christ.”

**Reply:** Yes, there are family connections, peer pressure, and friendships. A hymn has the thought that we must tear down every idol from its cherished throne and worship only God. We are all hoping to mount this summit of Christian character development and be mature.

When we consecrated, we made a momentous decision to thoroughly commit our lives to serve God, but once that commitment was made, we had enemies in Satan, the fallen angels, and other areas. We started the battle wondrously with the Lord smiling on us and giving us a period of refreshment and growth, but then trials began to occur. At the end of our life, if we have reached the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, as it were, we will awaken to hear Jesus say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). Whether or not we attain that commendation is up to us—a big job lies ahead, and we have to face it.

**Comment:** This statute of destroying utterly is plainly stated. Not only did the Israelites disobey it and not tear down what others had built, but they built their own altars, groves, images, etc., to heathen gods. As 1 Kings 14:23 states, “For they [Judah] also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.” That can happen to us as Christians too—not just getting rid of faults and idols we have at the time we consecrate but adding new idols and faults as we go along.

**Reply:** From another standpoint, one of the first things good King Josiah did when he matured was to search out and destroy everything in connection with heathen worship.

**Comment:** Verse 2 mentions “every green tree.” Apparently, specific trees were devoted to specific deities. For example, the oak was devoted to Jupiter, the laurel to Apollo, the ivy to Bacchus, the olive to Minerva, and the myrtle to Venus.

**Reply:** Also, lewd acts were committed under the trees, which were cultivated and pruned not for aesthetic reasons but for shade and the hiding of immoral practices associated with heathen religion. In Asia Minor today, we see evidences of the worship of Diana, Aphrodite, and other goddesses. Virgins were given over by their families to a year’s service as harlots in heathen temples. In fact, it was considered an honor to have enough faith to devote one’s daughter to this lewdness. Although Israel did not go as far in regard to revenue, hints of such immorality are in the King James translation. However, certain Hebrew words have a much stronger connotation than is apparent in the English of 1611. The attractiveness of evil is universal and contagious, whether along these lines or along the lines of money, power, or something else. For example, some individuals make a practice of walking over the backs (or the corpses) of other people. While the natural picture is being discussed, there are spiritual similarities.

**Deut. 12:4** Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

Moses was saying, “You shall not do unto Jehovah as these others did unto their gods.”

**Deut. 12:5** But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

**Deut. 12:6** And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

**Deut. 12:7** And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

After the Israelites entered the land, God would choose a place in one tribe where they would come to worship and offer their sacrifices, burnt offerings, tithes, heave offerings, vows, freewill offerings, and the firstlings of their herds and flocks. It is interesting that in regard to this one place God would choose, the Israelites were kept dangling for many, many years. Not until David’s day, more than 500 years hence, was the place more specifically chosen.

The expression in verse 5, or one similar to it, “But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there,” was used repeatedly. Verse 11 reads, “Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.” See also verses 14, 18, 21, and 26, as well as Deuteronomy 14:23; 15:20; 16:2; etc. More or less the same specific advice was given to worship in the place that God would choose, and there the offerings would be acceptable to Him. This advice was not heeded.

**Comment:** Verses 1-4 of this chapter instructed that when the Israelites entered the land, they were to destroy all of the places and images where heathen gods were being worshipped. Now they were told that one place would be chosen where they could worship the true God.

**Comment:** Not only did Moses include prophetic hints of ways in which the Israelites would go astray, but also he instructed them to be on guard lest they enter into these sins.

**Reply:** Yes, the duty of one in Moses’ position was to *warn* the people.

**Comment:** With a singular place being given, there would be problems because of distance.

**Reply:** Yes, because of the distance, the people would be perplexed as to what to do. More instructions were given elsewhere.

**Deut. 12:8** Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

Verse 8 hints that the Israelites would not adhere to all of God’s advice but that each would do “whatsoever is right in his own eyes.” And that is exactly what happened. The Israelites began to be rather loose in their observance of the commandments, and as time went on, they did more or less what they pleased. Also, in the days of Jeroboam, worship was divided between Jerusalem in the two tribes and Dan and Beth-el in the ten tribes.

The time element of verse 8 was the end of the 40 years in the wilderness. During the 40 years, the Israelites certainly could not worship in one specific place that God would choose, for they

had to follow the cloud. They may have been in one location for only a night, and at other times, they remained a year or two in one location, until suddenly the cloud indicated they were to move on. In other words, the Israelites' experiences in the Wilderness of Sinai were somewhat in disarray, for they did not know from day to day where they would be.

**Comment:** Whenever God lifted the pillar of the cloud—whenever the pillar retracted up into the main cloud—the Israelites prepared to journey, for the cloud would shortly begin to move.

Verse 8 also suggests that some liberties were taken here and there during the wilderness wanderings. Certainly the people were punished, and many were put to death for murmuring and disobedience. Perhaps, too, little infractions occurred on an individual basis, where the entire nation could not be charged. While they were in this pilgrimage state, the spirit of unrest and instability affected their concentration in trying to do God's will as well as they could.

Although Moses was speaking at the end of the 40 years, the Israelites had had a severe problem with the daughters of Moab just before they entered the Promised Land. Therefore, disobedience continued up until that time. On the whole, however, at the time they began to cross the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership, the nation was relatively purged. In fact, the people did some rather extraordinary things under Joshua, showing that God's proving of Israel during the wilderness wanderings had a wholesome effect in that period of their development. Entrance into the Promised Land would occur shortly, after the rest of Moses' long discourse on this one day and then his death. He spoke in the morning, there was a break at noontime, and he resumed in the afternoon, continuing almost until sunset.

Incidentally, in addition to the Book of Deuteronomy, the Book of Leviticus consumed a very, very short period of time. However, the books of Exodus and Numbers covered a longer period of time, Numbers being all 40 years.

**Comment:** Wording similar to that in verse 8 appears twice in the Book of Judges. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). The thought of a "king" was brought in. During the Period of the Judges, obedience was more of an individual responsibility, but the people disobeyed. When God gave Israel a king in response to their demand, there was a great responsibility on the part of the king to try to set the example, cleanse the land of heathen practices, and have pure worship in the Tabernacle or Temple, as Josiah tried to do.

**Reply:** The people seemed to need a visual representation. When Moses and Joshua were taken off the scene, the Israelites should have realized that God was their King and Leader. But the fact that God was invisible affected their obedience, and judges had to be raised up from time to time when the people fell into disarray.

**Deut. 12:9** For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

When did the Israelites "come to the rest and to the inheritance," which God gave them? That time did not occur until the reign of Solomon, for after crossing Jordan, they were engaged in warfare for six years and the subjugation of the land. The rest and stability continued to allude them through the Period of the Judges and during the reigns of Saul and David. The same is true with us as Christians. We are in a pilgrimage state down here until we enter the Promised Land beyond the veil during the Kingdom reign of Christ.

**Deut. 12:10** But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that



ye dwell in safety;

**Deut. 12:11** Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

It was more than 500 years until God revealed to David that the Temple was to be built as a place of worship on a particular mount in Jerusalem.

**Comment:** The time delay before the building of the Temple caused problems in Israel just like the time delay in the Gospel Age when Jesus did not return and set up the Kingdom as soon as was anticipated. In his absence, Papacy misappropriated Scriptures and set up the “Kingdom” prematurely.

**Reply:** Yes, and that is somewhat the case, in principle, since 1914 and up to the present time. Somewhat of an analogy can be made.

**Deut. 12:12** And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

**Deut. 12:13** Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

**Deut. 12:14** But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

Verses 12-14 are somewhat repetitive of earlier verses in this chapter. However, verse 12 goes into great detail to say that not only the males but also their children and servants were under a similar obligation to heed God’s Word and the instructions Moses was giving.

Verse 13 is a hint that the Israelites would begin to offer burnt offerings “in every place that thou seest” and not obey the injunctions of Moses or look forward to instructions of the Lord. If we put ourselves in the situation of the Israelites who entered the land back there, before God revealed the one place He would choose as a central point of religious observance, what would we have done for our offerings and religious worship during this time period, which included the 450 years of the judges? Since the Israelites had obligations to offer burnt offerings, sacrifices, etc., during this time, the proper practice would have been to present their offerings at the Tabernacle, which had been set up in Shiloh, instead of making offerings in any place that was convenient. In other words, common sense should have seen that the Tabernacle was a temporary expediency until the Temple was built. Moreover, the Israelites should have listened to and obeyed the advice of whomever God raised up as their leader. (Of course they had to be careful that the individual was a true representative of the Lord.)

**Comment:** The property owner and his children and servants, as well as any Levites who were present, were all to rejoice in bringing sacrifices to the place the Lord would choose. Therefore, a property owner was responsible for allowing his family members and those who were working for him sufficient time and liberty to offer sacrifices and to rejoice in them.

**Deut. 12:15** Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

**Deut. 12:16** Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

Starting with verse 15, we have to reason out some of the instructions. What is the thought of “notwithstanding thou mayest”? While the Israelites were under some strict commandments, there were also less strict rules under certain circumstances. In other words, notwithstanding all of the restrictions placed upon them as a people, when they entered the land, they could kill and eat flesh in all their gates (that is, where they settled), “whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.” All could eat, both the unclean and the clean. Moses mentioned this detail of including those who were unclean for reasons like being a leper, for such individuals were not to go without food. The Lord took into consideration the necessities of life—bread and water, as it were—both back there in the literal sense and for the Christian in the spiritual sense. When it comes to religious observance, however, one has to be more circumspect with regard to behavior.

Thus there was this provision for the sustenance needs of the unclean and the clean of natural Israel. But then Moses added, “As of the roebuck, and as of the hart.” What was different here?

**Comment:** The Israelites could eat whatever they lusted after, but it had to be a clean animal.

**Reply:** Yes, that is one point. Both of these animals were clean according to the Law. But the difference is that these animals were *wild*, not domesticated. Therefore, in order to eat the flesh of these two wild animals, the Israelites had to hunt and kill them with spears or bows and arrows, and the pierced animals would bleed. The Israelites could not offer these hunted animals in religious observance because some of their blood was spilled in a wrong place for a burnt offering, but the animals could be used for food. Therefore, the implication is that the animals offered as burnt, sin, etc., offerings were *domesticated*, that is, under the Israelites’ care and keeping, such as sheep and cattle.

These fine distinctions were abruptly introduced by Moses without a full explanation. The Lord gives us the necessary information in His Word, but He desires us to exercise our minds in judgment. Through Moses, God was beginning to challenge the Israelites to think—but within the parameters of the divine will—and to use common sense in their conduct. This is also true with regard to us as new creatures. We are new creatures in an old-creature body, and both need sustenance and nourishment, as it were.

**Comment:** If we put ourselves in the place of the Israelites who were listening to Moses, we can imagine their emotional reaction to the instruction of verse 15. With few exceptions, they had been eating manna for 40 years, and now they were told they could have a much more varied diet when they entered the land.

**Comment:** At first, verse 15 may seem confusing as to whether “the unclean and the clean” were the animals or the people eating the animals, but the description would have to apply to the people. Otherwise, the Law about not eating unclean animals would be violated. Also, from verse 22, which reads, “Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike,” it is clear that “the unclean and the clean” were those who were doing the eating.

**Comment:** Moses cited the roebuck and the hart as examples of clean wild animals. His point in verse 16 was that no matter what clean animal, the Israelites were not to eat the blood.

**Reply:** Yes, clean wild animals could be used for food, but their blood first had to be drained into a vessel. From that vessel, the blood was poured upon the earth and covered with dust. The Israelites were to realize that the pouring was a rather sacred injunction, or order, from

God. In other words, when they killed a clean wild animal, they were not to simply spill the blood but were to show a certain respect. Wherever the Israelites were, they were to pour the blood forth upon the earth in a sort of reverential manner and cover it with dust. In this way, the Israelites showed respect and reverence to the Creator.

The point of verse 16 was that the blood had to be drained from the animal, and in no sense, could the Israelites drink the blood of the offerings. Because of the Jews' background under the Law, when Jesus made the startling statement near the end of his ministry "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," many left him (John 6:54,66-68). Jesus asked his apostles, "Will ye also go away?" Then Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." We can begin to empathize with the severity of the decision making that faced Jesus' disciples. Sometimes new creatures have to make excruciating decisions, but if we ask in faith and look to the Lord for guidance, He will overrule our decision making so that we come out all right. We may make a few blunders, but He will guide us if we are very devotional in our conduct and moral walk.

Jesus said further, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). What a test that statement was for the disciples! Sometimes the introduction of new truths leads to splits and divisions. Spiritually speaking, the consecrated of the Gospel Age eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood, sacrificed at Calvary, in order to have life within themselves to be a sin offering.

**Q:** The Scriptures contain a lot of statements about blood—the life was in the blood, the blood of slain Abel cried out from the ground, the blood of the offering was poured out at the base of the altar, the blood of the saints cried out from beneath the altar, etc. (Rev. 6:9,10). What is the real significance of the blood in these scriptural references, particularly when it is poured out on the ground? Is the blood symbolic? Is it literal? Does it have some esoteric property?

**A:** In one sense, blood signifies death. When Paul said, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," that "blood" did not just represent scourging, for example, but the consummation of a sacrifice, the *death* of the animal (Heb. 12:4). In regard to the significance of the blood, the sacrifices offered by the nation of Israel did not depict the sacrifice of the Church. Rather, they pertained to natural Israel whether at the time setting of Deuteronomy or in the Kingdom Age, when sacrifices will also be offered. The sacrifices represented that in no sense do the worldly, the unconsecrated, the merely nominal professed people of God, participate in the sin offering. To be a participant, one must be wholly consecrated. Also, to be accepted by God as more-than-overcomers, Christians must have the spirit, drive, and zeal that would be manifested by the Lord's goat in contradistinction to the scapegoat, whose blood was not offered on the altar. There is a clear distinction or separation between the two goats in antitype.

**Comment:** The blood that was poured out at the base of the altar was figuratively doing the same thing as Abel's blood that was spilled on the ground. Both cried out for satisfaction.

**Reply:** Yes, another aspect of the blood is its crying out for retribution. "All the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias" was required of the generation of Jews at the First Advent (Matt. 23:35). Therefore, blood spilled on the ground represents, among other things, the need for retribution on those who willfully participated in the death of God's people down through the Gospel Age in proportion to their culpability according to knowledge.

**Deut. 12:17** Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

**Deut. 12:18** But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

“Thou mayest not eat within thy gates” signifies that the Israelites could not eat their tithes, firstlings of the flocks, sacrificial offerings, vows, or freewill offerings at their own homes but had to eat them “in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose.” These were given to the priesthood for their use and could not be offered in the Israelites’ private dwellings but had to be offered in the proper place. Incidentally, the “place” God would choose was like a mystery until much later in Israel’s history.

**Deut. 12:19** Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

**Comment:** The Israelites did not forsake the Levites, even though they disobeyed the Law.

**Comment:** We are reminded of Jesus’ statement when he sent the 70 disciples out two by two. “The labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). In other words, the Israelites were to recognize this commandment with regard to the Levites.

**Reply:** The garment of a Levite was held in distinction throughout Israel’s history prior to Pentecost and the destruction of the Temple in AD 69.

**Deut. 12:20** When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

**Deut. 12:21** If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land and desired to eat flesh, they could eat “whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.” In other words, they had the liberty to eat any of the clean *domesticated* animals they did not intend to offer as a sacrifice—any “of thy herd and of thy flock ... whatsoever thy soul lusteth after”—without the necessity of going down to Jerusalem.

**Deut. 12:22** Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike.

The Israelites also had the liberty to eat clean *wild* animals such as the roebuck, antelope, and hart. However, wild animals could not be offered in sacrifice at the Tabernacle or Temple. When an animal was hunted, blood was spilled of necessity, but the blood of wild animals was treated differently than that of domesticated animals. In the latter case, the blood had to be drained and could not be partaken of. The blood of wild animals also had to be drained, but much of it was spilled in connection with the hunt itself. Thus the Israelites could eat clean animals, domesticated or wild, without having to take them to the Tabernacle or Temple. For almost 500 years, the Tabernacle was at Shiloh, and during that time, sacrificial offerings had to be made there—that is, until the Temple was built in Jerusalem in Solomon’s day.

**Deut. 12:23** Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou

mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

**Deut. 12:24** Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

**Comment:** This prohibition was first given after the Flood when Noah was told he could eat flesh. “But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat” (Gen. 9:4). Therefore, this prohibition was nothing new.

**Deut. 12:25** Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

“Thou shalt not eat it [the blood]; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children.”

**Deut. 12:26** Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:

Verse 26 is a repeat of what was already discussed. It is customary for the Heavenly Father to mention multiple times those statements He wants us to particularly concentrate on. The principle is that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established.

**Deut. 12:27** And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.

**Comment:** One reason for the repetition is that domesticated animals could be used for temporal needs and also for spiritual needs in the Tabernacle or Temple. God was trying to help the Israelites understand the two different purposes.

**Reply:** Along another line, sometimes the consecrated are lax in not making a proper discrimination with the unconsecrated who attend meetings. Such individuals should not be recognized as brethren, yet many unwittingly call them “brother” or “sister” because they have attended meetings for some time. We have to be careful because this nondiscrimination does more harm than good.

Many Jewish commentators overlook the fact that a separation should be made in the middle of verse 27. Otherwise, we might conclude that burnt offerings were included in the eating. However, burnt offerings, whether of the priesthood or of the people, were *never* to be eaten but were to be *wholly burnt*, or consumed, upon the altar. Verse 27 should break as follows:

“And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God.”

“And the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.”

The flesh of other offerings could be eaten after the blood was drained but not the flesh of burnt offerings. Generally speaking, no translation makes this separation. For example, sin offerings brought by the people to the priesthood could be eaten by the priests. However, sin offerings that were offered for sin by the priesthood could not be eaten. Also, the flesh of peace offerings could be eaten by the people.

Very few are familiar with all of the offerings. Depending on the nature of the sacrifice, sometimes the blood was poured at the bottom of the altar, and sometimes it was poured or

sprinkled on the horns of the altar.

**Deut. 12:28** Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

Verse 28 shows the responsibility of the parents for their offspring. In antitype, there is a certain degree of responsibility not only for our own soul—to work out our salvation with fear and trembling—but also for witnessing to marital and family contacts. Moreover, we are to do “that which is good and right in the sight of the *LORD thy God*,” not our own sight. Even if we do not understand what God says to do, we are to obey and trust that He knows best. As time goes on and we mature, we find that, to a large extent, obedience brings results with regard to not only natural health, to some degree, but also spiritual health. The Creator sets the standard.

**Comment:** We like to quote the Scripture “To obey is better than sacrifice,” yet if we do not sacrifice, we are not being obedient.

**Deut. 12:29** When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

Moses entered into the future experiences of the Israelites. He was so confident in God’s promises that it was as if he were actually participating. In reading, we should put ourselves in the situation as Moses did here.

**Comment:** At the burning bush, Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God replied, “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain” (Exod. 3:11,12). When Moses and the children of Israel returned to that very mount after the Red Sea crossing, he was strengthened in his confidence in God.

**Deut. 12:30** Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

Moses was saying, “Take heed to yourselves that you are not ensnared by following the practices of the heathen nations after they are destroyed from before you. Do not inquire after their gods. Do not do likewise.” The tendency of both natural and spiritual Israel is to look for improvements in worship, but God has thoroughly furnished everything that is needed.

**Deut. 12:31** Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

Verse 31 is startling. “Every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they [the heathen nations] done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.” This practice of offering children had already been performed and would continue to be performed during the six years of the Israelites’ entry into the land, the Period of the Judges, and the Period of the Kings.

Similarly, when one becomes blind or goes out of the truth, whether in the natural or the spiritual sense, how great is that blindness! The people thought, “It would be better to put a live animal on the altar than a dead animal.” How subtle were the deceptions! Perverted

judgment reasoned, “This is an improvement, for a live animal is a better sacrifice.” However, the people were adding to God’s Word and would receive proportionate punishment. Such wrong reasoning can subtly change a person until, within a year or two, he goes into complete outer darkness. Previously he may have been very astute in doctrine and behavior, and then a change occurs. There is always a beginning, and the beginning precedes the act. Secret reasoning must be nipped in the bud. The Word of God is sufficient to thoroughly furnish the workman, Jew or Christian (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

**Comment:** For all of the people who have burned Christians at the stake, verse 31 is very condemnatory. How could they burn someone alive for supposedly being a heretic when the Scriptures are so clear that such burning is an abomination to God?

**Reply:** In the future, when educational films are shown of this actual practice, the sadistic joy on the part of the inquisitors in the period of the supposed Holy Inquisition will be exposed. First, the burning of children in the natural sense will be shown. Next will be seen scenes of Christians being burned in the Gospel Age.

**Deut. 12:32** What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

**Comment:** There are at least three witnesses to this principle: Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 and Revelation 22:18,19.

**Deut. 13:1** If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

**Deut. 13:2** And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

**Deut. 13:3** Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

**Deut. 13:4** Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

**Deut. 13:5** And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

Here is a case where a false “prophet, or a dreamer of dreams” prophesied something unusual or striking, and the sign or wonder came to pass. In other words, the nature of the prophecy was a miraculous deed. Because the individual spoke “to turn you [the Israelites] away from the LORD your God, ... and ... to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in ... So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.” There is also an application for the Christian today. Based on the principles enunciated here, Christians are given insight as to how to respond. Moses told the Israelites, “Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

**Comment:** Notable characters such as Edgar Cayce and Nostradamus have presented insights

from the fallen angels, who of course cannot see the plan of God with complete accuracy.

**Reply:** Yes, seers have spoken superior knowledge under the influence of an unholy spirit. From their vantage point, the fallen angels can predict with considerable accuracy on some occasions. However, their predictions are not infallible. When God prophesies through His holy messengers, that is a different circumstance.

In the situation here in Deuteronomy, the sign or wonder comes to pass. Whether the sign or wonder is an act, a prediction, or a healing, the determining factor as to how to react is to perceive the end result of what is done. The point is to search out what the sign or wonder leads to. In this case, the end result was clear, for the purpose of the prophet was to lead the children of Israel to serve another god—a practice that was strictly forbidden.

If the miracle is a healing, we need some kind of guideline to determine whether it is of God. For instance, consider the acts of Benny Hinn on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. His healings have drawn quite a large following.

**Comment:** If a ministry is contrary to the principles in Scripture, such as teaching prosperity for the Christian, that should alert us.

**Comment:** When the healed individuals are touched by an unseen force and fall down, they characteristically *fall backward*. For example, Eli, the high priest who neglected to remove his unfaithful, evil sons from priestly service, *fell backward* and died (1 Sam. 4:17,18). Therefore, falling backward indicates the healing is not from the Lord. The normal or proper reaction would be to prostrate and humble oneself *toward and before* God.

**Reply:** Also, Dan was described as an adder in the way that bites the horse's heels, causing the rider to fall off *backward* (Gen. 49:17). Falling backward is an unfavorable indication. Sometimes when a well-known faith healer gets very enthused over what he is doing, he even begins to hiss like a snake. As already mentioned, a red flag is the different and contrary gospel teaching of temporal rewards and life for faithfulness instead of suffering, self-denial, and death.

**Comment:** In antitype, this chapter in Deuteronomy was a warning that down through the Gospel Age, occult things would occur in the name of Christianity. Not only individuals but also the nominal system would falsely prophesy. For example, the two-horned beast will become the false prophet in the near future (Rev. 16:13). "And he [the two-horned beast] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live" (Rev. 13:13,14).

**Reply:** There are both individual experiences and generalized applications. In the great prophecy of the future regarding the bruising of the final members of The Christ, for example, the beast, dragon, and false prophet will speak in unison (Rev. 16:13,14). We are forewarned to be very wary of following miraculous or supernatural deeds, signs, and wonders.

**Q:** Does the warning not to follow other gods correspond with Acts 20:27,30? "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.... Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Is the principle more or less the same in warning of prophets or people speaking outside of Scripture, whom we must be careful not to follow?

**A:** Yes. Also, if a person is a show-off, if there is a degree of dramatization in connection with



his deeds, that is a warning he is a false prophet.

**Comment:** In the Amplified, Acts 27:30, just quoted, includes the words “distorted and corrupt things” in parentheses. The Adversary distorts the truth.

**Reply:** Yes. Another clue of a false prophet is the behavior of the individual—the wiggling of the hips, for example—that suggests pleasures of the flesh or is a form of entertainment. There are all kinds of deceptions. By closely examining Scripture as a whole, we are able to perceive these signs. God educates and helps us to know what to look for to give us direction whether the prophet is false or true, whether the message is an abhorrence or a leading. The possibility exists that the Lord will raise up an individual for the particular purpose of giving a startling true message, and we are given clues as to how to search out the message to be sure.

**Comment:** On the subject of “baptism,” the falling backward in water immersion is a picture of falling into death in comparison to one who prostrates himself forward.

**Comment:** Healers seem to take pleasure in letting the audience see their power. The Lord would never use the Holy Spirit in such a careless manner.

**Reply:** Yes, we have seen ten or more people all fall down in unison. The falling backward is obviously not preconceived or orchestrated. Benny Hinn gets so delighted with the individual that he turns around and waves his hand like a wand and several people fall backward in a row. It is remarkable that there is never an injury.

**Comment:** Moses was warning against anything that takes away from the worship of Jehovah, so the future lying signs and wonders supporting the Trinity will really diminish God’s power by seeming to make Jesus and God the same. These verses are a good warning against the Trinity, which will appear very religious and wonderful to the uneducated Christian world.

**Reply:** Today’s emphasis is more on a “Bi-une” than a Triune God. Many things are changing. For instance, the pope says that the Roman Catholic Church never taught hellfire and that the problem has been more the laity. The present pope has also tried to ask forgiveness for the persecutions of the Dark Ages—as though his personal repentance could pacify the terrors of past ages.

Verse 3 tells us not to heed the deeds or words of such a deceiver or dreamer. The last half of the verse gives the reason God permits the deceptions, namely, to prove us, to know whether we love Him with all our heart and soul. He tells us in advance, just as He told natural Israel back there, that He will prove His people. To accomplish the proving requires a time delay to allow certain untoward things to happen. The delay may seem unduly long, as if the Lord is not heeding, but He watches the reactions of His people, natural and spiritual, in these periods of testing. Thus time delays and the permission of evil are factors that enter into the testing and proving process of whether we are worthy or unworthy of the high calling.

**Comment:** It is interesting to note that not only the Pharaoh at the time of Moses but also King Nebuchadnezzar with regard to Daniel called on their magicians for counsel. Of course Daniel was a seer under the Lord’s guidance, but the others were under the Adversary’s influence. There may be an end-of-the-age counterpart in connection with the feet members.

**Comment:** Sometimes these five verses are used against Pastor Russell to label him a false prophet for having predicted a date that did not materialize as expected. A simple way of refuting that argument would be to say that if the date does not come to pass, the incorrect date does not in any way draw away from Jehovah. In fact, it should do the opposite and make

us go back to the Scriptures with more diligence for information and truth that are due.

**Reply:** Exactly. God gives instruction on how to discern the difference between true and false prophets, so we are to look for clues that lead to deception in one form or another—and thus away from God. For instance, when the Pastor fasted for three days and three nights and prayed constantly in that experience, an understanding of Tabernacle shadows opened up to him. Deceptions that basically differed with teachings of the New Testament were being taught by others, and he wanted to know the proper reply. The Pastor was rewarded with an understanding of the significance of the Church’s participation in the sin offering, the filling up of the sufferings of Christ that are left behind (Col. 1:24). A lot of little details clarified, and he was given the proper understanding of Hebrews 13:10-13, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

The instruction of verse 4 was to “walk after the LORD your God, ... fear him, ... keep his commandments, ... obey his voice, ... serve him, and cleave unto him.” If the general ministry of a prophet leads us to love, serve, and obey Christ or God, depending on the circumstance—if his ministry is helpful in worshipping God with all our heart—that individual is a faithful and true servant. We must analyze end results. When we hear a new teaching, it is helpful to ask, “What does that doctrine lead to?” If we see upon reflection that the end result of following a particular suggestion or teaching can lead us astray, we should reject it. We are to “prove all things” and “hold fast [to] that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

**Q:** Would Paul, prior to his conversion, have based his persecution of Christians on verses 1-5?

**A:** Yes, he had the proper zeal and motivation, and so might we. However, we need to take inventory on and review our own actions, teachings, and understanding from time to time. If details clarify, we should admit it. There is not one person who does not grow in Christ if he is faithful. Our understanding is a *process*.

**Q:** Didn’t John tell Jesus that one who was not with the disciples was casting out devils in his name?

**A:** Yes, and Jesus said to leave him alone, for the individual was responsible for what he said and did (Luke 9:49,50). The disciples were to follow Jesus and not let the distraction inordinately affect them. However, if wrong teaching reaches a point where it intrudes into the faith of the disciples, then action has to be taken. We are not to be the policemen of the world—or even necessarily of other ecclesias. Our responsibility is with our own environment, and it is a matter of experience and growth. If our heart is in the right direction, wanting to serve God fully, the Lord will instruct us by His Holy Spirit. If there is a misunderstanding, He will reveal it to us by either knocking us over the head or using a gentler method depending on our responsibility.

**Comment:** On one occasion, Jesus spoke favorably, “Let him alone, for he who is with me is not against me” (see Luke 9:50). On another occasion, he gave an unfavorable comment: “He who is against me is not with me” (see Matt. 12:20). When Moses was told that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, he said, “Enviest thou for my sake? [I] would [to] God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:26-29). Moses was happy that others were prophesying by the Holy Spirit.

**Reply:** Yes, and Paul had experiences too, both favorable and unfavorable. For a while, some were prophesying in Jesus’ name and casting out demons, but the point came when they

needed a lesson. There was also a possessed woman who followed Paul, praising him day after day. A Christian has all kinds of experiences. Familiarity with Scripture and asking, "What would Jesus or the prophets do?" is helpful. Informative examples give us guidance.

Verse 5 is strong. "That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of ... Egypt, ... to thrust thee out of the way which ... God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee." There is a New Testament application to the Christian. In proportion as we discern that a person is deceived into thinking he is doing right but is actually doing harm to the Lord's people, or that his motivation is misleading brethren out of the truth, we are responsible for taking action. If the misleading is not just a wrong interpretation of one verse, which may be a difference of opinion, but it adds up to serious error, then it becomes our duty, even if the individual is our best friend or one in the family, to speak out. These trials are difficult, but through such experiences, the Lord God doth prove us. Sometimes we do not get the test for 40 or 50 years, but if we are going to make our calling and election sure, we will be tested. We believe that everyone who is of the Little Flock will have to make a very hard decision in his life. He will get that experience at least once, and sometimes several times, to prove whether he really loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

**Q:** How should we view ministers who preach the acceptance of homosexuality?

**A:** The membership of the denomination is particularly responsible. The idea of homosexuality being acceptable in the sight of God began primarily in the Episcopal Church many decades ago. This type of thinking should be nipped in the bud as much as possible wherever it arises. Of course our ministry is not to condemn homosexuality but to try to develop a Christlike character and to follow Jesus' instructions. We should be careful not to get distracted into doing a certain work that may inhibit our growth in running for the prize of the high calling. Usually a bypath or deception is in the guise of doing a good work, for example, feeding the homeless or clothing the poor. Our Christian walk is a matter of growth and maturity.

**Q:** Is there a distinction between a "prophet" and a "dreamer of dreams"?

**A:** Usually the prophets of old based the authority of their statements on a previous vision or dream or an audible voice in the inner ear, so the terms are somewhat equated. Then they declared, prophesied, or pronounced what they were instructed to do.

**Comment:** Numbers 12:6 states, "And he [God] said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." In Moses' day, information was revealed to both true and false prophets through a vision or an audible voice in a dream. With the true prophet, the message came from God; with the false prophet, the source was the Adversary.

**Reply:** Today something very unusual is happening. Some individuals on television claim to have seen God and talked with Him. One person even said that Jesus was happy-go-lucky. Both men and women are speaking quite commonly of having such experiences. Some of them may have had communication from the fallen angels. As Jesus said, we are to judge according to fruitage. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16-20). The Apostle James said, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" (James 3:11). No, a pure spring cannot bring forth both bitter and pure water, for there would be an incompatibility. Accordingly, with the ministry of a prophet

or teacher, be the person male or female, the tendency is in one direction, and we must discern if it is the right direction. Some are studious and well-behaved and have good moral principles, but all they teach is that to be a good person is serving God. Theirs is a gospel of morals only.

**Q:** Chapter 13 contains three separate scenarios, and all three have an antitypical application to the ecclesia. Wherever killing or the death penalty is mentioned, would the representation be excommunication today?

**A:** Yes, or depending on the situation, it could be avoidance. For example, we should avoid one who habitually takes advantage of the hospitality of brethren and has no employment, going from ecclesia to ecclesia. In some cases, a pained look should be given to the person who says something we do not like, and it would not be necessary to say anything. Excommunication is used when the offense cannot be gotten rid of. In a large group of the consecrated, some are bound to be untoward, and they are to be handled in different ways according to circumstance and as the Lord leads. However, the requirements of teaching are more stringent. "So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee" indicates a rather positive action.

**Comment:** These warnings about a false prophet were written largely for our admonition at the end of the age.

**Reply:** Yes, and a "prophet" is a teacher.

In any large group, if we wanted to be a detective, we could find smokers, drinkers, etc., but as long as these habits are not publicly demonstrated, that is not our work. Of course if elders or teachers have such habits, or if they are going around debauching others, we have to deal with them in a strong way. But there are individuals who are doing untoward things on the side, and sometimes we learn about them in the oddest ways. For example, once we had a critical vote in the class, and unbeknownst to us, the brother who had the deciding vote was a smoker on the side. Subsequently, an unconsecrated individual who attended the class mentioned having seen him. The class had to revote on the critical issue.

**Deut. 13:6** If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

**Deut. 13:7** Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth;

**Deut. 13:8** Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:

**Comment:** This situation involved one's closest earthly companion and/or one's own flesh and blood. Not only was the person not to tolerate the sin, but he was to take immediate action to uncover it. The required action shows (1) how grievous the Lord considers such sin and (2) our responsibility in exposing the sin.

The responsibility includes initiating the exposure regardless of what the final results will entail. The first example is one's own brother, which can be a very close tie. The addition of the phrase "the son of thy mother" indicates a tender tie in that the feelings of two parties, the brother and the mother, are involved. The mother would have feelings for the son she bore, who is now in a questionable mode. Of course the spiritual lesson suggests that remedial action has to be started, for the sin is serving "other gods, which thou hast not known." The reference is not to a doctrinal difference of opinion, generally speaking, but to a sin that can jeopardize one so

that he goes out of the truth in a more serious way. Examples of “other gods” could be the pursuit of worldly pleasures or a leaning toward fraternization with the nominal Church, both of which can gradually lead one to forsake consecration. We are to weigh what the net result would be in following the suggestions of this consecrated party who is trying to entice us secretly. Are the suggestions dangerous? Would they lead away from the worship of God? Based on the conditions here, we can see how soul-wrenching the decision might be.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37).

**Comment:** We are familiar with two unrelated instances where the consecrated families, including a prominent elder in one case, are still socializing with and welcoming a formerly consecrated brother who not only has left the truth but also has embraced an Eastern religion; that is, both family members have left Christianity completely. Because these former brothers are sweet and gentle, they are invited to family gatherings, and the other family members do not say anything. And there is additional contact outside of family gatherings. What Moses said here in Deuteronomy makes clear the responsibility of the consecrated. Jehovah regards the sin of enticing brethren to go after “other gods” as an abomination.

**Q:** Verse 6 speaks about one who is trying to convince us that his way is right and the Lord’s way is wrong. What is the responsibility of the consecrated who are “secretly” being enticed to worship other gods? What should be their reaction to the formerly consecrated individual who is trying to turn them away from the worship of Jehovah, especially since the sinning one is still associating with the brethren? In each of the two cases just referred to, the consecrated family members consider the sinning former brother to be a wonderful father and husband.

**A:** If the family members invite us to a gathering, we should make our feelings known in order to get them to realize the sinning former brother has already more or less sealed his fate. We could ask, “Will so-and-so be there? Have you invited him?” If the answer is yes, we should make known our reason for declining to attend. In that way, we would at least help the family. Moreover, if we are sitting at a table, and an individual who should have been disfellowshipped sits down, we should get up and leave. The reason for our leaving would be very obvious.

**Q:** To our knowledge, we have not had any contact with the individuals who have gone back on their consecration. However, the consecrated family members, including the elder, tolerate and even defend the individuals. What is our responsibility toward these family members? How should we respond?

**A:** When the subject of love comes up, we sometimes hear the statement “We are never to judge.” One answer is to quote 1 Corinthians 6:2-4, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.” (Note: The last sentence is sarcasm.) When we use this quote, a coolness sometimes follows. However, we should rebut false-love reasoning every time we can. Some are so liberal in their thinking that they always give the benefit of the doubt, even to one who not only is under suspicion but also has been put in prison. It is one thing if a person has paid the penalty, but to assume he is innocent despite prison is another matter.

**Comment:** To bring more relevance to the problem, when a person goes out of the truth, we can assume some will continue close contact with the hope that at some point in time, the individual will come back. Such reasoning becomes the excuse or rationale for maintaining the connection.

**Reply:** Particularly in studies, we should point out the dangers that are inherent in being too generous in our thinking.

**Comment:** Going to foreign gods, such as returning to the nominal Church or to the world, is like a dog returning to its vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). For someone whose eyes have been opened to see that the Trinity is not scriptural to then go back and become a Catholic, for example, is grievous, for it means he has lost sight of who Jesus and God are. Forsaking consecration and accepting an Eastern religion are even worse.

**Reply:** Unfortunately, some go back and remain in the nominal system.

**Comment:** If an elder still fraternizes with a son or close relative who has abandoned his consecration and gone into an Eastern religion, we should not vote for that elder as a speaker. And if the class is aware of the situation and continues to elect him as elder, we probably should not attend the convention of that class.

**Reply:** That is true for a current situation. However, if a situation goes back many years, it is not always possible to rake up the coals. A situation should be dealt with when it is happening. Many elders whom we are not familiar with float around and speak in various classes and at different conventions. As we become aware of matters, we almost have to make known our feelings on an individual basis. Those who have the opportunity to lead studies can bring out the dangers at that time. Several important doctrines are being changed. Things are happening that are both favorable and unfavorable.

**Comment:** As with a pet, the value of a lesson is when disobedience is handled immediately. Otherwise, the animal will not associate the event with the chastisement. For children, the attention span is a little longer, but even with a child, the lesson has to be associated with the misbehavior. The same is true when someone consecrated commits gross sin. If the matter is ignored or mishandled for years, there is no value in reopening it.

**Reply:** We had an experience where a party who was getting to know our teachings asked why we did not say anything years ago about a certain matter. When the situation was identified, we replied that we never knew what was happening. Because of our long years in the truth, the party assumed we knew everything that was occurring behind the scenes. However, we are not “in the club,” so there are many things we do not know about. The Scriptures say that for conscience’ sake, we should not ask too many questions on something that is long-standing. This particular atrocious situation had occurred many years before, but we did not know about it. Therefore, we had some fellowship over the years with this grievous sinner who had not repented, whereas had we known, we would have had no fellowship.

**Comment:** If some have a problem with the thought of enticing “secretly,” Deuteronomy 17:2-6 is helpful and more embracive. “If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, ... And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, ... and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death.” This text gives the same basic advice but does not use the expression “entice thee secretly.” It would be very appropriate to bring these Scriptures to the attention of the consecrated family members. Perhaps they will then see what their actions should be.

**Reply:** Yes, we should let our thinking be known to those with whom we communicate.

**Comment:** With regard to the consecrated family members who continue to fellowship with a relative who should be disfellowshipped, we could say, “The Scriptures in the studies we have had reveal that the situation is wrong. Therefore, I cannot, for conscience’ sake, attend any further meetings. However, there is always hope, and I can pray that you will see the principle and disengage yourself.”

**Comment:** When Elijah thought no one else was left in Israel who was serving God, the reply was that there were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). The brethren in general think that if we are in present truth, we are the 7,000 and the rest are the nominal spiritual element. Since they do not think that nominalism enters our brotherhood, the usual reply in regard to the formerly consecrated is, “His consecration was not accepted” or “How do you know that his consecration was accepted?” In addition to the two consecrated families mentioned earlier, we know of two other instances where brethren have reneged on their consecrations and gone completely back into the world. We are very close to the consecrated family members, but these Deuteronomy Scriptures compel us to speak up. The family members think they are doing the right thing and being good witnesses, but there is danger.

**Comment:** You need to have reserve in that fellowship lest you become contaminated.

Consider another example. Universal salvation is extreme unbalanced love, which purports that even Satan will be saved. Individuals who advocate this belief often have congenial, sweet, loving, kind dispositions with nice mannerisms, but in God’s sight, the doctrine is abhorrent. In fact, we should not address those who go into universal salvation as “brother” or “sister.”

**Comment:** God looks upon this sin with severity because even if we ourselves are not enticed, others will be. We are reminded of Paul’s question “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6). Then he said not to keep company with one who is called a brother—not even to eat with him—if he is living an immoral lifestyle. Later Paul said he was not giving the advice for the sake of the one who had committed the infraction or for the one who was hurt by it but for the sake of the class (2 Cor. 7:12). With both natural Israel and the Christian, God is severe with this principle lest others fall into sin.

**Q:** Is there a difference between those who go out of the truth and those who remain and entice others “secretly”?

**A:** In the case cited in 1 Corinthians 5, the party was still in the truth in the sense of attending meetings. Not only was he fellowshipping with the brethren, but many in the class felt their love was so great that they could countenance his fellowship, even though he had not repented, confessed his sin, and manifested shame. They reasoned that his fellowship with them was an opportunity to exercise their largesse of spirit in overlooking, through the eyes of love, the grievous sin he had committed. They did not even rebuke him. Jude prophesied that at the end of the age, not far distant, love would be a strong test among the brotherhood.

**Comment:** The word “secretly” is appropriate, for it indicates a worldly spirit coming in among the consecrated. If an allowance is made in one case, then others feel allowances should be made in other instances. Principles are thus violated.

**Comment:** In verse 8, which says, “Neither shalt thou conceal him,” the point is that this person spoke *secretly*, but we are to expose his sin *openly*. “Neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare [him].”

**Comment:** We are reminded of the general principle “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (1 Cor. 15:33). Therefore, distancing oneself from immorality is imperative.

**Q:** It is hard to believe that the Israelites went so frequently to the groves that were established for the purpose of heathen worship and the immoral practices associated with it. What was the attraction, especially when God was so explicit in His instructions not to do such things?

**A:** The Jews were enticed by friends, neighbors, etc., who made the suggestion. Going to the groves then became a practice. Because fire did not come down from heaven and consume them—because swift retribution did not take place—they continued in the immoralities. God was proving His people, and one of His methods is to see what a person will do. We are tested when He allows certain things to happen. The example of those who succumb encourages others to do likewise.

In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, Jesus said that one committed adultery in marrying a divorced woman. However, that would not be true if the divorce was valid, scripturally speaking, because of fornication. In that case, the innocent party was free to remarry. We seem to be heading toward Sodom and Gomorrah in this country with homosexuality, lesbianism, and free love. This libertine spirit is already quite rampant in Europe, particularly in Denmark and Holland, and it will eventually affect the consecrated and be a great test. Exposure is compulsory in the case of adultery, for example.

**Comment:** Jeremiah said that people who were worshipping false gods created with their own hands were at least true to those gods, whereas Israel, who was ostensibly worshipping the one true God, went after false gods at the same time. Jehovah never made it easy for the old man to obey Him. Whether in New or Old Testament times, faithfulness has always been a path of self-denial and sacrifice. In contrast, false religions offer self-fulfillment, pleasure, and escape from sacrifice. Israel’s abounding groves of iniquity were appealing to the flesh.

**Deut. 13:9** But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

**Deut. 13:10** And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

**Comment:** Although brethren may be obedient in not consenting to the sinner or concealing him, they may not want to “kill” him. A big problem with many of us is confrontation.

**Reply:** We should try to kill the *influence* of those who entice brethren to go after other gods, and we can keep ourselves separate. Some matters are long-standing. The thinking is very loose in regard to looking with pity on those who have been improperly divorced and done all sorts of things over the years. This “family” business makes the trials more excruciating, but we must do our best to fight the wrong principles tooth and nail.

**Comment:** The reasoning can be used that if we had been Israelites and this sin had occurred back there, the Lord would have expected us to literally kill the person. This illustration demonstrates just how serious the matter is. The spiritual lesson is that “a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand” (Psa. 91:7). These are real casualties in a spiritual sense. While a person may not die according to the flesh, he could quite easily be dying according to the spirit.



**Reply:** The influence has to be killed.

**Comment:** These principles will certainly apply later on down the road. When the Israelites had to kill every man, woman, and child in possessing the land, they killed the influence. Even the animals had to be slain.

**Reply:** It is encouraging to us that while we have strongly differed on some points, there seems to be a growing number who are listening, even though the principles are hitting them. Some who are listening have for years held the view we are challenging. In spite of the discomfiture they are experiencing, they come back for more. Something will happen in the movement, we believe.

“Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death.” We are to initiate a killing of the influence as best we can, as already discussed.

**Deut. 13:11** And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

The action taken by an individual respecting another individual has an influence on others, and that influence is for good *if righteous judgment is being exercised*. We do the best we can. Where possible, we like to nip things in the bud, for in that way, we are more successful. Long-standing conditions are harder to deal with, and then we must watch ourselves.

**Comment:** When we disengage fellowship based on principle, we should give the reasons.

**Reply:** We usually read an excerpt from the Volumes or something we have written in the past.

**Deut. 13:12** If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

**Deut. 13:13** Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

**Deut. 13:14** Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;

**Deut. 13:15** Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

Are there any comments on the exploration and determination of what is to be done?

**Comment:** In principle, investigating the rumor is like cleaning the leaven out of the house.

**Comment:** Three situations are addressed in this chapter: (1) a false prophet, (2) a family member or close friend, and (3) a city.

**Comment:** Death was the penalty for spiritual whoring. Even the animals had to be slain.

**Comment:** In the previous case, the individual was a *witness* of the sin. In this case, a *rumor* was

heard in regard to a city, and the rumor had to be searched out diligently.

**Reply:** Normally in today's society, a rumor should not be searched out like that, but this advice was given in Holy Writ because of the serious nature of what would result from turning a deaf ear.

**Q:** If we hear a rumor about our brother, shouldn't we search it out?

**A:** That would depend on the nature of the rumor and how to explore it. We must be careful not to become spiritual policemen and make that our dedication. Those who spend their consecrated life searching for brethren who are espousing error neglect their own sanctification and development in the meantime. The question is a little too broad to give a definite answer.

**Q:** In this case, since a whole city was involved, would the antitype be the entire ecclesia?

**A:** Yes, that analogy can be drawn. Rather than natural family according to the flesh, this case deals with the family of God.

**Q:** What is the derivation or background of "Belial"?

**A:** The word is related to Baal.

Verses 12-15 required harsh and definite handling because of the seriousness of the sin. We are reminded of the individual in the class at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5). Paul feared that the whole ecclesia would be adversely affected. In fact, he was more concerned for the class than even for the individual who had committed the abomination, for sin is contagious and spreads (2 Cor. 7:10-12). Many of the brotherhood could be infected.

**Comment:** The principle is that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). The leaven must be entirely cut off so that it has no opportunity to spread, infect, and grow.

**Reply:** In several cases in the movement in the distant past, the ecclesias that would be more involved with an incident were notified in order to bring about an awareness of the danger and the necessity that it be handled properly. Today we might be more or less constrained to do the same and thus at least alert those who are more responsible as to the need of handling it.

**Comment:** Verses 12-18 are a good example of how the rod-of-iron rule will work in the Kingdom.

**Reply:** The New Covenant will be similar to the old Law Covenant in many respects, the differences being seemingly in the ceremonial details. We are reading about the responsibilities of Israel under the old Law Covenant.

Verse 12 gives the key that the rumor was heard "in one of thy [Israel's] cities." Therefore, the responsibility existed in the confines of their own nation.

**Comment:** Back there it was the brotherhood of Israel, now it is the brotherhood of the Lord, and in the Kingdom, it will be the brotherhood of mankind.

**Reply:** Yes, the scope will be larger in the Kingdom.

**Deut. 13:16** And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and

**it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.**

**Deut. 13:17** And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;

**Deut. 13:18** When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

**Comment:** With Papacy's premature claim to set up the Kingdom, the misapplication of Scriptures like these seemed to give them justification for killing Protestants.

**Reply:** Yes, they considered Protestants to be heretics and misused Scripture to justify their actions. They accused Protestants of following false gods and doctrines. The Muslims do the same in principle but in another direction.

**Comment:** How serious this situation was for God to say, "And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand"! Once Achan confessed to taking a Babylonish garment as a spoil from the defeat of Jericho, the Israelites killed not only him but also his family, oxen, and flocks, and they burned his household goods. All were stoned, burned, or destroyed (Josh. 7:18-26).

**Reply:** Yes. How easy it was to snatch some little item, but the penalty shows the thoroughness of conviction required of the individual in his abhorrence of evil in harmony with Jehovah's will! The nation had to be in agreement not to touch anything of the enemy. Moreover, the city was not to be rebuilt.

**Comment:** Until Achan came forth, the entire nation was held responsible, so if we extrapolate the lesson to the brotherhood, the toleration of one individual taints the entire congregation.

**Reply:** Of course this offense was serious because it alienated the people and deflected the worship from Jehovah to be shared with the worship of another god. Some feel it is advisable to take the benefit of everything. The religion of Bahai takes the good out of all religions. This belief flatters a person's ego into thinking, "I will go even better than the worship of Jehovah. Why not have 105 percent by including the good points of some of the other religions?" The human mind certainly needs governors just as a car needs to stay within the speed limits.

**Q:** As a practical example among the consecrated today, if a class goes astray on a fundamental doctrine or harbors a brother who is guilty of grievous sin not repented of, would we have to disfellowship the ecclesia? In other words, would it be wrong to attend their convention?

**A:** Yes, if the situation is comparable. Many years ago an individual committed adultery and wanted to attend a certain class. The class refused him admittance, so he went to meet with his mate in another class. The first class, being so concerned because the second ecclesia was in the same regional area, wrote a letter to the classes in the Northeast warning about the individual and saying he had been excommunicated. That case was handled properly and effectually.

**Deut. 14:1** Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

Verse 1 treats the subject of flagellation, in which a person punishes himself by cutting his flesh, lying on a bed of nails, sleeping on a stone floor, etc. Martin Luther followed this practice for a

while, until Romans 1:17 came to him in a rather remarkable fashion: “The just shall live by faith.” In other words, he saw that justification comes not by works of flagellation but by faith.

**Comment:** Today many of the younger generation walk around with mutilations—tattoos and tongue, ear, and eyebrow piercings.

**Comment:** Leviticus 19:28 reads, “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.”

**Q:** Does the wording “Ye shall not ... make any baldness between your eyes for the dead” indicate a special type of baldness?

**A:** Yes. Instead of putting ashes on the head and clothing themselves in burlap, which was the proper way of mourning, some shaved their scalp with a stripe from the front to the back of the head, dividing the hair into two component parts, so that they would be ostentatious in society. That mark on the head symbolized they were punishing themselves and mourning. However, the mourning was to be genuine and not with crocodile tears. Posturing in a mode of contrition or grief for the loss of someone should be done with reality and not as a means of show or indignation, as the high priest did in rending his garments at the trial of Jesus. Verse 1 refers to a particular type of baldness that was practiced at the time Moses was speaking.

The Apostle Paul properly shaved his head with the temporary vow of a Nazarite. The shaving had to be done in harmony with and according to God’s instructions and not through man’s invention of broadcasting a message to the public, which has no relevance to true religion. A Nazarite vow could be lifelong or according to a time period.

**Comment:** Paul said that we do not sorrow like others who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

**Comment:** The spiritual lesson for us would be not to do something just to appear more religious. Our actions have to be genuine.

**Reply:** There seems to be an example of this today by a brother who is going around from country to country doing a peculiar thing to advertise the sufferings of Christ. The act is somewhat comparable to the temptation that came to Jesus to show how religious he was and the degree of his faith. The Devil said, “Choose a particular occasion when the public can see you demonstrate your faith in God by jumping off a pinnacle of the Temple. God’s angels will catch you with their hands” (see Matt. 4:5-7). Of course Satan knew that if Jesus followed through in disobedience, Jesus would be committing suicide, for no angels would catch him. There are many subtleties of invention, of which this is one. They are dangerous yet insidious because they have a show of godliness.

**Comment:** Jesus gave the advice not to go around with a sad face, for contrition and repentance are between the individual and the Lord (Matt. 6:16).

**Reply:** Yes, contrition is inward and should not be publicized. Paul said, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (Rom. 14:22). Many people like to show how much faith they have by using happy slogans as daily greetings in a demonstrative way that is improper. To tell others how devoted we are to the Lord is a form of braggadocio, spiritually speaking.

Along another line, there are times when the hand should not be given in fellowship. There are different nuances, both proper and improper, and we have to be careful that ostentatious behavioral action is according to a “thus saith the LORD” and not our own imagination. The human mind is very inventive.

**Deut. 14:2 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.**

If we conform our life, behavior, and devotion through Christ according to God's will, not our own will, we manifest the true duty of a Christian. A true Christian is completely devoted to obedience and the doing of God's will without additives that seemingly enhance it. When Paul gave the Bereans strong advice, they went home to see if his words squared with Scripture. Paul commended them for searching the Scriptures (Acts 17:11).

**Comment:** Exodus 19:5 applies to natural Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." 1 Peter 2:9 applies to the New Creation: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

**Deut. 14:3 Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.**

**Deut. 14:4 These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,**

An abundance of Scriptures, such as much of the Book of Leviticus, indicates these animals were clean and permissible to be eaten.

**Deut. 14:5 The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.**

**Deut. 14:6 And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat.**

As a principle, verse 5 confirms the fact that when God says something important, it is stated at least twice (see Deut. 12:15). Although clean, these animals could not be offered as a ceremonial sacrifice because they were not domesticated. Being hunted as wild animals, they were harmed, wounded, bruised, and slain—and were thus apt to be injured and bleeding—so they could not be put on the altar. Verse 6 introduces additional information; namely, every beast that parts the hoof into two claws and chews the cud could be eaten, even though it could not be put on the altar.

**Deut. 14:7 Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you.**

The camel, hare (rabbit), and coney were unclean and could not be eaten because although they chewed the cud, they did not divide the hoof. In other words, *both* characteristics were needed for an animal to be considered clean. The coney was well known in Moses' day, but its identity is uncertain today, even though all kinds of explanations are given.

What is the spiritual meaning for the Christian? Antotypically speaking, why did an animal have to both chew the cud and divide the hoof in order to be clean? Why were both characteristics needed?

**Comment:** Not having a divided, or cloven, hoof pictures the Christian who is lopsided by not studying both the Old and the New Testament. He is not rightly dividing the Word of truth. Not chewing the cud means the Christian is not assimilating what comes from the Word of

God and applying it to his life.

**Reply:** Yes. The camel does not part the hoof, for example. From a natural standpoint, its broad foot is especially convenient for traversing the desert. A “shovel” is better as a foot than “claws,” for sand would go between the claws and prevent the camel from standing firmly on the surface. Thus the hooves of the camel are specially adapted for walking on the desert floor.

Two attributes are necessary to designate the food that is proper for the Christian to eat. Some Christians polarize along the lines of doctrine and others concentrate on character to the exclusion of doctrine. The latter group feels that all one has to do is to live a moral life and that the study of details in God’s Word is not important. They focus on “love” in 1 Corinthians 13 and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. The first group stresses knowledge and forgets that it is necessary to be conformed to the image of Christ. However, the purpose of our calling is not only to be sanctified by truth but also to follow the example of Jesus in word and action. We need *balance* to make our calling and election sure—as on a seesaw with an equal weight on each end. Chewing the cud and parting the hoof are both necessary.

**Deut. 14:8** And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase.

From a dietary standpoint today, pork is one of the most nutritious foods, but in times past, it was dangerous because if not thoroughly cooked, it could cause trichinosis. Since swine were considered unclean under the Law, that is how we must view them from a spiritual standpoint. Swine have a divided hoof but do not chew the cud. A pig does not masticate the food but swallows it practically whole, gorging itself.

Between verses 7 and 8, the more dangerous spiritual condition is not chewing the cud. Wrong doctrine is more pervasive and damaging worldwide not only in Papacy but also in other religions. Spiritually speaking, if the thirst for knowledge is not properly acted upon and one caters to the flesh as well, that path can lead to Second Death. Swine wallowing in the mud and dogs returning to their vomit are pictures of Second Death (Prov. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22). Incidentally, touching any dead carcass was dangerous under the Law. Today a person puts on gloves, but cloths, etc., were used in the past and then thrown away.

**Comment:** In summary, the Christian who divides the hoof but does not chew the cud rightly divides the Word of truth but does not meditate on the truth and know how to apply it to himself.

**Deut. 14:9** These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat:

**Deut. 14:10** And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you.

The simple requirements for marine creatures to be clean were that they have fins and scales. Under the Law, the Jew could not eat lobsters, clams, scallops, oysters, catfish, or shrimp. Of course these creatures do not have legs or a normal head, so they cannot part the hoof or chew the cud. Hence there was a change in how to distinguish the clean that could be eaten from the unclean. The two requirements for marine creatures correspond to the two for clean animals; namely, the fins correspond to the parting of the hoof, and the scales to chewing the cud. Fins (plural) provide locomotion and direction. Usually there is a fin on the back of the fish (and other places depending on the type of fish) plus the tail, one being like a rudder and the other being the means of propulsion. Thus there is a parallel in locomotion: the fish traveling or swimming, and the animal walking. Stated another way, the fin and the tail correspond to the

divided hoof of the animal, both signifying rightly dividing the Word of truth.

The scales, which are like shields or armor, are a means of protection. Like a breastplate of righteousness, they cover the heart and the stomach. As the Christian “chews the cud,” he meditates upon the Word. The chewing of the cud, which is a *multiple* motion (up and down, up and down, etc.), corresponds to the *multitude* of scales on the fish. The mechanics help us to fasten into memory the different qualifications that were essential under the ritual Law so that we can properly interpret the spiritual significance.

**Q:** Can the scales be likened to teeth?

**A:** Yes, the multitude of scales are comparable to the multitude of teeth.

The preceding description of the difference between clean and unclean land animals enables us to make these close comparisons with marine creatures, thus refining the Word of God. The Lord had all of these thoughts in mind before He ever provided a written Word.

**Deut. 14:11** Of all clean birds ye shall eat.

**Deut. 14:12** But these are they of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,

**Deut. 14:13** And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind,

**Deut. 14:14** And every raven after his kind,

**Deut. 14:15** And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk after his kind,

**Deut. 14:16** The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,

**Deut. 14:17** And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the cormorant,

**Deut. 14:18** And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

Verses 11-18 pertain to birds. All clean birds could be eaten. Then follows a list of 21 unclean birds, which could not be eaten. The eagle is often considered from a favorable standpoint in Scripture, such as in the care of its young, and other attributes picture qualities the Christian is enjoined to cultivate by God’s grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, yet as a food, the eagle was considered unclean. In other words, here in chapter 14 of Deuteronomy, we have to confine the focus of our attention on whether these creatures are a clean or an unclean food.

Why were all of the birds in verses 12-18 unclean? Incidentally, the various translations differ as to the identity of some of these birds because no one is sufficiently familiar with the birds that were indigenous to Israel at that time.

**Comment:** It seems that all of the predatory species of land animals, water creatures, and birds were considered unclean.

**Reply:** Yes, to state the matter succinctly, that is true.

**Comment:** In addition, many of these are birds of darkness, of the night.

**Reply:** All of the unclean birds were predatory and ravenous like the raven, but the *night* birds

were even more unclean—like a double whammy, as it were. The word “ravenous” comes from the meat-eating characteristic of the raven and the appetite that accompanies the vicious devouring.

Normally, we think of the owl quietly seated on a branch with its great big eyes and its perked ears. However, a lot more is involved in the functioning of the owl. For one thing, it has extremely acute hearing. In fact, as scientifically proven, the owl can hear the heartbeat of a mouse, that is, of a rodent. And the eyes, being so large, provide a wide range of vision. By turning its neck in both directions, the owl can survey 270 degrees, and in addition, the eye enables the owl to have a 360-degree range of vision, so that nothing can escape its attention. Once the owl hears its prey, the viciousness of the bird is apparent.

**Comment:** Even today birds of prey are not considered as being good for eating.

**Reply:** These birds were intended as a moral lesson for the Christian in this age, and detailed documentaries on each species and its characteristics will supply education, information, and excitement in the next age. As another example, the Lord has provided the hymns of the future through the 150 Psalms and others. Thus God has given us an encyclopedic basis, as it were, of things He intends to do not only in the Gospel Age but also in future generations and on other planets in various realms of the universe. As interesting as the educational characteristics and details are, the Christian cannot spend too much time on them, for there are other easier-to-understand and more important doctrines of *what to do*, whereas most of these animal and creature lessons indicate *what not to do*. However, the negative characteristics give direction for our conduct.

What characteristic of the swan is outstanding in regard to its uncleanness? It is a cantankerous bird with a nasty disposition. The swan is beautiful and graceful in the water, but it has a very short temper. When a swan attacks with its long neck and beak, a person can hardly get away. Although the bird is rather slow, its neck is like an elastic band, so when the swan puts its head forward, a person can barely escape the nastiness. Some Christians have this characteristic of the swan. They have a reputation for being very loving and kind until they are crossed. Then a vicious streak is manifested.

What about the pelican? Not only is the pelican more awkward in appearance, but it is greedy. It consumes a great amount of food with its large bill and pouch. The pouch is rather elastic so that it holds quite a quantity of gulped-down whole fish.

**Comment:** The pelican, known as the garbage truck of the waterfowl, is like a flying swine in some cases. Waterfowl in general, being predatory birds, seem to have been prohibited for food, whereas chickens, turkeys, quail, pheasants, etc., were clean.

**Reply:** With so many birds being enumerated as unclean, even the fastidious natural Jew would think that all unlisted creatures could be eaten, such as the goose and the chicken. In other words, since God multiplied the list of unclean birds in such detail, then by implication or inference, whatever was not listed could be eaten—especially since nothing was mentioned about the parting of the hoof or the chewing of the cud.

**Comment:** A childhood ditty comes to mind: “A strange bird is the pelican; its bill can hold more than its belly can.” Being greedy, it gulps down more and more food.

**Q:** Leviticus 11:20 reads, “All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.” What is the thought of “going upon all four”?



**A:** Whether a creeping insect or a fowl, the stomach is very close to the earth. For example, if a bat is on the ground, its belly is of that nature. Also, the wings of a bat are clumsy, so the bird flies as best it can under this circumstance. A creature of the night, it is like a mouse with wings, being abhorrent even to our natural instincts.

Since the stork is usually considered a symbol of birth and fertility, a stork lighting on a house was regarded as a favorable omen. However, a stork is also known for the care of its young and thus would probably be sensitive and cantankerous toward others.

**Comment:** These unclean birds have two wings, which represent the Old and New Testaments. But because they lack a second characteristic, comparable to chewing the cud, they are unclean and picture the Christian who misapplies moral teaching; that is, they picture a “wolf” (Matt. 7:15).

**Reply:** Yes, the two wings symbolize dividing the Word of truth, but as birds of prey, they have a rapacious disposition that is inconsistent with the Christian life.

**Deut. 14:19** And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten.

The creeping aspect makes “every creeping thing that flieth” unclean because the creature is too close to the earth. Stated another way, it minds earthly things. Accordingly, the Christian is to both think and be on a higher clime.

These flying insects are unclean because they do not have two “legs above their feet” for jumping off the earth (Lev. 11:21-23). For example, locusts are flying insects that could be eaten because they jump off the earth and thus do not creep. “Creeping” suggests being snakelike with a belly close to the earth—and hence groveling in the dirt.

**Deut. 14:20** But of all clean fowls ye may eat.

Verse 20 is a repeat of verse 11.

**Deut. 14:21** Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the kid in his mother’s milk.

Verse 21 contains four divisions of thought, each of which will be considered separately.

1. “Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself.” The reason for the prohibition was that the blood could not be drained from the animal, for shortly after death the blood coagulates. This law pertained to the Jews and Jewish proselytes, both of whom were under the Law.
2. “Thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it.” The “stranger” here was a resident alien. All things being equal, a resident alien could eat the flesh of clean animals that were not ritually slaughtered in connection with Tabernacle or Temple sacrifice.
3. “Or thou mayest sell it unto an alien.” At first glance, these three requirements seem rather strange. The Jew and the proselyte Jew could not eat of the dead animal, but it could be given to the stranger or sold to the alien. An “alien” was a foreigner, that is, a sojourner. What was the reason for the distinction?

**Comment:** The stranger and the alien were not under the Law.

**Reply:** That is correct.

Most of the lower-cost meat purchased from supermarkets comes from cows that (1) ceased to give sufficient milk to cover the cost of feeding and caring for them and (2) died of themselves. The higher-priced beef is raised to produce meat. At the prime of life, when most profitable, the animal is slaughtered (and thus does not die of itself) and is then sold to the public. Some of the animals may have diseases before they are shipped to the abattoir, so it is just as well that we do not know too much about the background of an animal before eating it. Cooking the animal covers a multitude of sins, as it were. Of course an animal that died of itself could not be either given or sold to others if putrefaction had set in.

4. “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk.” From a natural standpoint, it would be cruel to deprive the mother and the kid from a few days together. There should be some satisfaction to the mother in nurturing the kid (or calf) and some enjoyment to the kid itself before being slaughtered.

A practice among the heathen religions at the time was to boil a kid in the mother’s milk and then to use that milk to spray or sprinkle trees and certain crops, the thought being that the trees and crops would become more fertile by this procedure. This fourth requirement prohibited Israel from following that practice. The implication is that there was to be sensitivity with respect to the weaning of the calf from the mother.

As Christians, we want to glean the higher spiritual lessons that are indicated in the type. The “mother” represents the Sarah Covenant, and the “kid” pictures a new Christian. Generally speaking, Christians should abide by the instructions of the Sarah (or Grace) Covenant of their consecration. Another lesson is that we should not try to put an adult head on a child’s body, that is, on the newcomer in the truth. The newly consecrated are not to be burdened too quickly with restrictions that are implied by thorough consecration. We should judge a child as a child, and treat him as such, with the hope that he will grow to maturity in time.

An overemphasis on restrictions can be done in various ways. For instance, if we stress the responsibilities of consecration too severely to our literal children, they will be afraid to consecrate. Going into the Promised Land is somewhat comparable. Only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, gave a favorable report, saying, “Yes, the walls of the city are high, and giants are in the land, but God is on our side.” Thus we should encourage the Christian and make allowance for a difference in development. The Apostle Paul gave instructions with regard to consecrated Christians who come into the midst of the congregation after making vows along certain lines and thinking these are what the Lord desires. Paul said we should be careful for conscience’ sake in how we treat them. To expunge the enthusiasm of a new convert would be sinning against Christ, so we need to have sensitivity along this spiritual line.

**Deut. 14:22** Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

Why was the word “truly” inserted in verse 22? “Thou shalt *truly* tithe all the increase of thy seed.”

**Comment:** The Israelites were to tithe honestly and not bring lame and sick animals.

**Reply:** In addition, the intention was to prevent carelessness in the numbering for a tithe. There was to be no manipulation when the animals went “under the rod” (Lev. 27:32). To please God, one had to be strictly honest in everything he did. A lot of subterfuge was involved

in tithing, for the human mind, if not governed by the Lord's principles, could be ingenious in carrying out the instructions.

As Christians, we are not required to tithe, but we recognize that everything given to us belongs to the Lord. It is easy to talk, but the Bible says that if we have faith, we are to have it to ourself. And if we are conscientious and honest and do things with a pure conscience, we will pay careful attention to the details of our consecration.

Incidentally, as shown elsewhere, there was a tithe of a tithe (Num. 18:26). When the Levites received a tithe of all the nation, they had to, in turn, give a tithe to the high priest. Stated another way, the people gave tithes to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tithe that eventually accrued to the high priest.

**Comment:** We are reminded of Ananias, who “sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:1-3). Ananias and Sapphira withheld part of the money that was consecrated to the Lord and lied about it.

**Reply:** Yes, they violated the principle that was taught in the type.

**Comment:** Some of the Israelites intentionally sold measures that were a little shy. Perhaps the outside of the container was legitimate, but the walls were made too thick. The people thought they could cheat and still say, “I am giving ten measures,” but Jehovah is not fooled by such deviousness. Luke 6:38 expresses the proper relationship between the one who tithes and the Lord: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” If the giving was done out of an honest heart, the Lord's blessing overflowed, and the individual was so moved in love that he wanted to give even more. And that is the lesson for the Christian. We are so moved by the generosity of God in our lives that we want to give what is proper and is consecrated to Him. Giving that is “pressed down” and “running over” will return even more unto us.

**Reply:** Yes, the Lord will pour out a blessing so great that we cannot even receive it (Mal. 3:10).

Amos 8:5,6 tells that in the Kingdom Age, some will be outwardly obedient to the laws of the New Covenant under Christ, but in their heart, they will want to return to the old practices and make the ephah (measure) small and the shekel (price) great.

**Comment:** As a practical example, in a particular ecclesia environment, relatively little was put in the donation box to even sustain the interests of the ecclesia. The brethren in the class had sufficient means but were not recognizing their privilege of giving.

**Deut. 14:23** And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

A tithe offering (10 percent) was to be made of the Israelites' corn, wine, oil, and firstlings of their herds and flocks in the place which God would choose to place His name. The Temple was not built until Solomon's day, but when the Israelites entered the land, they would be able to go to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was set up for many years.

Notice, “thou shalt eat [it] before the LORD thy God.” The Israelites did not eat all of the tithe

offering of the different kinds of produce of the land and flocks and herds, but they ate *of them* while they were in transit and also in Jerusalem so that they were self-sufficient and not a burden on others. Stated another way, God allowed the Israelites to take their portion out of the tithe. Although that portion was very small because the tithe was one tenth of all of the goods of the year, it was a major portion from the standpoint of sustaining the offerer and the convenience of a last-minute meal. The Israelites ate of the variety of goods: corn, wine, oil, fruit, and firstlings of herds and flocks. Many of the males brought their families with them.

Even rabbis who have studied for years have difficulty understanding different parts of some of these plain statements. The authorities do not all agree on the interpretation. The true Jew back there simply wanted to know what God required. Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy all have to be considered, plus details supplied by some of the prophets. Anyway, the Israelites ate a sufficiency of the tithe while en route and at Shiloh or Jerusalem.

**Deut. 14:24** And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

A provision was made that under certain circumstances, modifications were allowed. “If the way be too long for thee [because of old age or health reasons], so that thou art not able to carry it [the tithe],” an alternative method could be pursued. Another reason for allowing the alternative was “if the place be too far from thee,” that is, if the distance was too great to go to Shiloh or Jerusalem.

**Deut. 14:25** Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

What was the alternative? Instead of carrying a burden, the Israelite could convert the items (wine, oil, firstlings, etc.) into money to take to “the place which the LORD thy God shall choose.” When he got to his destination at the Tabernacle or Temple, he was to reconvert the money back into the commodities that were too burdensome to take along.

While this answer seems to be simple, there were other ordinances as well. For instance, if the reason for the conversion was too great a distance, then an ordinance elsewhere said that after those Israelites converted the tithe offering into money, they had to add, as an out-of-pocket expense, an additional 20 percent (one fifth), for the Lord wanted the true value of the offering. In this way, a problem was avoided; namely, Israelites who lived in an agricultural community too far away from the Temple, and thus converted the tithes into money, might find when they got to Jerusalem that the money did not buy the equivalency of goods they had originally promised. However, by adding the 20 percent increase, they were able to give a comparable tithe in goods. In other words, because God wanted the tithing to be a happy occasion, the Law took into consideration other circumstances that would be a burden.

**Deut. 14:26** And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

“And thou shalt bestow that [tithe] money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after [for what they needed].” When the Israelites purchased the correspondency of tithing they had originally intended, they had the liberty of choosing their meal from what was purchased.

“Thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God.” Under normal circumstances, it was

mandatory for all males of a certain age to go to the Tabernacle in Shiloh or later to the Temple in Jerusalem for the three major feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. However, another problem usually arose. For instance, when the Israelites went to the Feast of Passover, how could they bring the tithe of the land, which was not available until either Pentecost or the fall of the year depending on the crop? Therefore, the Israelites did not have to bring the tithe in one lump sum but could bring it piecemeal as they were able and it was available. Or they could take the whole year, which would include the three feasts, and bring the tithe at the end of the year, that is, at the last feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. The “corn” (wheat, barley, etc.) was available by Pentecost, and later other produce and fruit were ready. The point was that the Israelites had some flexibility as long as they did tithe all of their goods.

“And thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household.” The “household” included the rest of the family and servants (hired, purchased, or born)—whoever accompanied the male, the giver of the tithe. To our understanding, the thought is not that all of the household had to go, for that would leave the home property completely vacant during travel time plus the feasts, some of which were seven days long. Someone had to remain behind to take care of the flocks and herds and to protect the property. The study of the Law is monumental, with here a little and there a little and many details to be studied.

**Q:** When the Israelites reconverted the tithe money into “whatsoever thy soul lusteth after,” why was “strong drink” included in addition to “wine,” especially when they were going to the three important religious feasts?

**A:** For those who are properly minded, strong drink taken with great moderation is no problem. One who does not govern his life and habits can go to excess on anything, even food, as a glutton. Just a teaspoon of “strong drink” can be of benefit at times.

Of course for the Christian, if one has taken a vow not to drink any alcoholic beverage or has a problem with alcohol addiction, it would not be advisable to partake of literal wine at the time of the Memorial. However, for others, wine is permissible for those who want to partake as our Lord did. In addition, some brethren drink wine for health or sanitary reasons. Thus we cannot lay down a law for all to totally abstain. There is nothing wrong with strong drink in itself, and sometimes, under certain circumstances, it is almost essential.

We should keep in mind that the agrarian society back there was completely different from our lifestyle today in the United States. For example, the mode of transportation and the type of food consumed are very different now. Only in the last 100 years or so has there been such a remarkable change. Therefore, in reading the Old Testament, we have to think in terms of life thousands of years ago, prior to the gospel, in order to get the true interpretation. If we interpret the Law as Christians and do not try to understand it as written for the Jews back there, right away our eyes are prejudiced. We must think in terms of when the Law was originally given.

**Deut. 14:27** **And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.**

Verse 27 treats the Levite but only under certain circumstances. What is the thought of “the Levite that is within thy gates”? When the Levites were not serving at Shiloh or Jerusalem, their term of duty having expired, they returned to their own homes in the Levitical cities and cities of refuge (Num. 35:1-14). In other words, certain cities on both sides of the Jordan River were specifically designated where the Levites were to dwell. Therefore, with regard to the term “the Levite that is within thy gates,” wherever the Israelites happened to be dwelling—in the north, in the south, or across Jordan—Levitical cities were appointed to take care of those

areas. The Israelites were to make provision for the Levites in their area.

“Thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.” In regard to taking care of the Levite “within thy gates,” the Jews who knew the Law understood what was being said here. Although the Levites were not landowners, they had property adjoining, or immediate to, the Levitical cities. This arrangement meant that each Israelite householder was responsible for always remembering the Levites. A later chapter of Deuteronomy will tell, with more specifics, how to provide for the Levites under certain peculiar circumstances.

**Deut. 14:28** At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:

In describing this third-year tithe, verse 28 was talking about the circumstance where a person was too far away or too ill to bring a yearly tithe. Therefore, on the third year, he could bring the tithe of the first, second, and third years. The Levite, who had no inheritance in the land, as well as the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, could come and eat “within thy gates” to satisfy their immediate hunger. When a circumstance arose making it necessary, because of hunger and want, to come on an emergency basis, they were to have the liberty to partake of the storehouse on an Israelite’s property. Of course things that were previously done should have taken care of them, but something could suddenly happen to change their circumstance and put them in an emergency situation. In such cases, the Israelites were to allow them to come and eat of what was in store at their residence.

Incidentally, as described elsewhere, another third-year tithe applied under other conditions. Each provision has to be studied in context.

**Q:** Is there a spiritual lesson for tithing?

**A:** Christians do not give a literal 10 percent tithe but their “all.” As we have opportunity, we should give help to the household of faith and, depending on the circumstance, to a neighbor, although the latter is not our mission. The danger of the Christian’s getting entangled with the Law is trying to do the works of the Law. However, as Christians, we should be aware of a person’s need and provide help as we have opportunity, both materially and spiritually. The Lord notes our generosity. If we are too selfish and too self-centered, we will not see the teaching, or principle, of the Law, which shows we should think of the needs of others. Of course we have to know the principles of God’s Word so that we are not taken advantage of, but we want to be sure that we never turn away someone who is really in want. Sometimes it is hard to know the difference, so we play it safe under certain circumstances unless we see that asking for money is a way of life for the individual.

The Scriptures tell us, “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1). However, this should not be our mission in life. For one thing, we need to take time to be holy. Some feel that the gospel call is to go out and be a missionary. For those who are so moved, that is all right, but they should not make that type of service mandatory for others. There are varieties of service, and the choice of service is between the individual and the Lord.

One caution is not to be too hasty in our service decisions. For example, giving service to an institution should be carefully considered before a commitment is made. Unfortunately, some naively work many years and are bitterly disappointed when they are turned out into the cold world and have nothing because they did not give thought in advance and make preparation for old age. Likewise, one should not be too hasty in making a vow to the Lord. Jesus’ advice to sit down first and count the cost pertains to all vows, not just to the initial consecration vow (Luke 14:28). It is advisable not to be too emotional in these matters.

**Comment:** It is wisdom to put away a little money to be able to care for our own needs and not burden others. Old age is difficult for many who have not taken such measures.

**Deut. 14:29** And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

The Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow could come to one's property in their rural area if they had a need. Individuals of these four categories could come and eat of this tithe, but they could not just come and take as much as they wanted—huge quantities—back to their own homes. Stated another way, they could come and partake according to their need, taking what they could carry in their hands. This principle was followed when Jesus and his disciples plucked corn from the fields as they walked along. The scribes and Pharisees were wrong to criticize, and Jesus found it necessary to go back to the Law and acquaint them with what they should have known in the first place.

The Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow “shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.” The spiritual lesson is that as we obey God's Word and principles, we are blessed accordingly.

A request was made to consider Deuteronomy 26:12 on tithing. To do so, we will read this Scripture, as well as a number of other Scriptures from the Pentateuch.

“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD” (Lev. 27:30).

“And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD” (Lev. 27:32). A tithe is one tenth. When the flock passed under the rod, the tenth animal—a sheep, a goat, or whatever—was marked with a red dye so that the owner would keep in mind that it was preserved to be given to Jehovah. That animal was taken as part of the tithe, even if it was lame or sick. We are reminded of the Parable of the Dragnet, in which the fish were drawn to shore and sorted; the good were put into baskets, and the bad were thrown back into the sea (Matt. 13:47,48).

“Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe” (Num. 18:26). The tenth part of a tithe was eventually given to Aaron, the high priest. The tithe was 10 percent, and the tenth part was 10 percent of 10 percent, or 1 percent of the original amount or increase of the flock.

“Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy [new] wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose” (Deut. 12:17,18a). In other words, the yearly tithe, which was to be taken for two consecutive years, could not be eaten on the home property. Instead it had to be taken to “the place which the LORD thy God shall choose,” which was Shiloh with the Tabernacle and later Jerusalem with the Temple.

“Thou shalt truly tithe all the [gross] increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there [Shiloh or Jerusalem subsequently], the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of

thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.... At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates” (Deut. 14:22,23,28). What even rabbis misunderstand is that the end of the year was not when Passover came. Although Passover eve in the spring marked the termination of one ecclesiastical year and the start of the next year, this text was talking about another type of “end” of three years, namely, in the fall, when the increase of the trees, etc. (the later crops), occurred. At that time, the Israelites could not take the tithe to Jerusalem because they were getting into the winter season, and the Temple was closed for five months of the year. Later on in history, years after the Pentateuch was compiled, another festival was added, thus increasing the length of the year beyond the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. The point of Deuteronomy 14:22,23,28 is that the tithe was stored in the fall and then eventually brought to the Tabernacle or Temple and given to the Levites. Stated another way, the bringing of the tithe had to wait for five months, so it was laid up and not consumed in any fashion during this period of time.

“And if a man will at all redeem aught [any] of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof” (Lev. 27:31). If it was too much of a burden for an Israelite to take the tithe to Jerusalem or if he lived too far from the Temple site, he could convert the tithe into cash and then later, when he went to Jerusalem, reconvert the money back into an animal to be offered in a proper fashion.

“But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.... Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye [the Levites] shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.... Thus ye [the Levites] also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD’S heave offering to Aaron the priest” (Num. 18:24,26,28). Of the tithe, the Levites had to give a tithe to the high priest.

“And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God [in the place he shall choose]” (Deut. 12:6,7a).

“When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me” (Deut. 26:12,13). The Israelite stored the “hallowed things” in the fall. Normally speaking, they would then be brought in the spring to the Tabernacle or Temple and given to the Levites, but in this particular instance, when it came to the third year, the tithes were removed from the master’s own home shed and put on the edge of his property so that any of the local Levites could have access to them with their containers (depending on the number of family members), as well as the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. However, they could not just take all they wanted, for there were fixed measures.

The specific reason for the third-year tithing was that no sowing or harvesting was to be done in the seventh year. During that year, the owners had to eat produce from their own property, but in addition, the local people and the cattle could help themselves to the produce in the field,



either taking what they could carry or eating it there.

This review gives us some idea of the tithing system. It is not necessary to go into all of the details, for most of them would be forgotten in a week or two anyway. Our object is to understand the *principle* of the tithing system under the Law, which can be likened to our Social Security and unemployment benefits. God's arrangement back there was of help to those who were in need or sick.

**Q:** Will tithing be part of the arrangement under the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age?

**A:** The Bible does not so state, but that might well be because the lifestyle will gradually revert back to an agrarian type of living, with every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree, as it were (Mic. 4:4). Eventually, before the Kingdom Age expires, society will be like the Garden of Eden with less and less dependence on the fruitage of the ground and more and more on the fruit of the trees. There are many ways of proving this statement, but the study would be deep and detailed. Meanwhile, it is preferable for us to concentrate on the *principles* of the perfect Law, which is even better than the Grace (or Sarah) Covenant of mercy and forgiveness. The Sarah Covenant, an exception to the rule, is a temporary arrangement that is not intended for eternity, whereas the principles of God's Law are forever. The Law is broader and more detailed in other respects, but, thank God, we are not judged by it.

**Deut. 15:1** At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

The year of release, which occurred every seven years, pertained to debts incurred during the seven years that were not entirely written off by fellow Jews. At the end of every seven years, there was a release from such debts.

**Q:** Is this a Kingdom picture in antitype?

**A:** Yes. The Law is a type from which the Christian can extrapolate information, but it really applies to the Kingdom Age, sometimes in a literal sense and sometimes in a spiritual sense. The emphasis is on the *end* of the seven years. The Kingdom Age will have seven time periods, and the Seven Creative Days will expire at the end of the Kingdom Age. The release being emphasized here is the test in the "little season"; those who pass that test will enter the ages of ages (Rev. 20:3).

After mankind are brought up to perfection, they will be free from debts, but the question is, How will they respond to that freedom? Those who react favorably will enter into the world beyond the Kingdom Age, and those who want to return to their former ways will be appointed to Second Death. The "release" will give them opportunity to prove whether they truly love the principles of truth and have imbibed them into their hearts and will give freewill offerings on their own. How they react when this opportunity of freedom is presented will decide whether they enter the age beyond the Kingdom. They must be released from Kingdom restrictions and given utter liberty for freedom of choice. Will they now love God for who He is and not for selfish reasons? Freedom of choice will be granted to all as the Kingdom Age *is expiring*—in the Little Season of the end-time period. Throughout all ages, God looks to see how people react with a freedom of choice between good and evil.

**Q:** Is the time frame the same as in the picture of Nebuchadnezzar at the end of seven years when his sanity was restored?

**A:** Yes, at the end of the seven-year period during which Nebuchadnezzar crawled on his belly, he was restored to his senses. The end of the seven years corresponds to the end of the 7,000

years and the end of the Kingdom Age. The king was then given freedom of choice, and what did he do? He responded favorably by publishing throughout the entire empire that the God of Daniel is the true God. Thus the king pictures those who truly come to their senses and praise God for their tutelage and experience of the seven (thousand) years.

**Deut. 15:2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth aught unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.**

If a brother is in need in the Truth movement, it is preferable, if possible, to give him money as a gift so that the amount does not have to be repaid. But that brother should not return again and again for money and thus use the gifts as a means of livelihood, for that would be taking advantage of the brethren. Along another line, a brother may borrow from other brethren for business purposes. Such a debt, entered into contractually, not only usually involves much more money but also is harder to forgive. However, the Scriptures caution us not to be surety for a brother, and that would be especially true for a business enterprise. Jesus taught the spirit of forgiveness, but we must be careful that others do not take advantage of us.

**Comment:** The term used is “the LORD'S release.”

**Deut. 15:3 Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;**

**Q:** Would a “foreigner” in the next age be one who has not come under the Kingdom arrangement?

**A:** Verse 3 could be used to teach that principle.

For the Christian, a “foreigner” would be someone not consecrated, not in the truth, who has business dealings. In the type, the Israelites could “exact” from a “foreigner” (a non-Israelite), thus requiring repayment regardless of the seven years. However, the Jews were to release their hands from debts with fellow Israelites when there was a need.

Sometimes a habit of generosity is established with brethren that is not too helpful to the recipient. The habit is not good for either the giver or the recipient. Where there is a need, it should be noted and acted upon accordingly, but where there is not the need, we should not be wasteful in our liberality.

**Deut. 15:4 Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it:**

The word “save” means “except” or, as in the King James margin, “*To the end that there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land.*”

**Comment:** We are reminded of Jesus' words: “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:32,33).

**Deut. 15:5 Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.**

The Lord God was saying, “Be careful to hearken unto my voice.”

**Comment:** When verses 4 and 5 are considered together, the thought is that there would be no poor in the land *if* the Israelites hearkened unto God's commandments and obeyed.

**Reply:** Yes, for the Law provided for the Israelites both temporally and spiritually.

**Comment:** The great number of poor people in Israel at the time of our Lord's First Advent proves that the nation did not hearken.

**Reply:** These promises were made null and void by Israel's failure to obey God's counsel. Jesus said with regard to Israel, and in principle with regard to the other nations, "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Matt. 26:11).

**Deut. 15:6** For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.

Israel will be the blesser nation in the Kingdom, the reigning nation with the capital at Jerusalem, so their largesse will go to others. Thus there will be no need to borrow, and no nation will rule over them. Stated another way, Israel will be a reigning nation in the Kingdom, and the "lending" will be Israel's mercy to the Gentiles. However, the commandment about lending to many nations but not borrowing applies in the present and past ages as well.

**Deut. 15:7** If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:

The "poor man" was an Israelite—"one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land."

**Comment:** The reading in general is like the distinction between the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law.

**Reply:** The Law is expressed succinctly in letter form in certain places for the sake of brevity, but here, where a fuller explanation is given, we must not lose sight of the spirit. Of course as Christians, we are not under the Jewish Law but are under grace in covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we can extrapolate certain principles of moral behavior from the Law that are very helpful.

**Comment:** Cain said of Abel, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). The answer is yes, and here Moses was saying to the nation of Israel, "You have a responsibility to one another."

**Q:** Did the Jubilee pertain to property and slavery?

**A:** Yes. At the end of 49 years (seven weeks of years), there was another type of release that was much broader in its ramifications. Spiritually speaking, it pertained to the opening of the Kingdom Age. Some laws already enacted in our day are trying to do this but in a poor way.

At the end of every seven years and at the end of 49 years, there was a release. In addition, a sabbath release occurred at the end of six days, with no work being done on the seventh day. Here we are zeroing in on the seven-year release.

**Comment:** The "poor man" would not be willfully poor, sponging off others.

**Deut. 15:8** But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him

**sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.**

The word “lend” means the money was a loan. If the loan persisted for seven years and was not fully paid back, the lender was to graciously forgive the one who was indebted to him, for it was the year of Jehovah’s release.

**Comment:** If the seventh year was approaching when the loan was made, the “poor man” would not be able to repay it, so the loan would ultimately become a gift.

**Reply:** By inference, the lender would act accordingly and loan just enough for that year or for several months, whichever applied. In other words, he would not give a seven-year loan if the time would expire shortly.

The year of release was a fixed time, whereas the principle of seven years applied to the seven years of the loan. Therefore, the seven years of the loan were not to be confused with the seven-year release of Jehovah, which was a calendar year that the whole nation abided by. The lender was free to use discretion, for it would be ridiculous to loan a large sum if the recipient would be free in six months under the year of release.

**Comment:** This principle is similar to that in 1 John 3:16,17, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good[s], and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love [agape] of God in him?”

**Reply:** Yes, although there was no time period.

**Comment:** The implication is that the Israelites were not to charge each other interest but were just to loan the money.

**Deut. 15:9** Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Of course the lender would not give the “poor brother” an exorbitant amount. The question would be, What is the *need* of the poor individual? A person might go with evil intent to another whom he felt was more blessed with this world’s goods. Verse 9 is talking only about the lender, but the individual who asked for the loan also had a responsibility, for he might reason on the loan to his own advantage. The lender had to determine what the poverty or the necessity of the individual was. If the brother was in real need, the lender was to satisfy that need until the year of release, that is, until the release was consummated.

**Comment:** When the year of release came, the debt was no longer owed. Therefore, the lender was not to say in his heart, “I will not loan the poor brother any money because the year of release is coming soon and he will not have to pay me back.”

**Reply:** That is true. The lender was to have pity and sympathy for the individual for the current need until the year of release.

**Deut. 15:10** Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto.

Verse 10 is saying that the lender’s generosity of spirit would prompt the Lord’s generosity to

prosper him. The lender would prosper both spiritually and materially for his consideration of and obedience to God's Law. If the lender had a generous spirit, then the Lord would likewise be generous, opening the "windows of heaven" to the lender, as it were, with a blessing that could scarcely be contained (Mal. 3:10). "The LORD thy God shall bless thee ... in all that thou puttest thine hand unto."

Today some churches use this Malachi text to solicit funds from members of the congregation to enhance the church treasury. "Give liberally to us, and the Lord will pay you back" is their cry. However, back in Moses' day, he was referring to a personal camaraderie and giving between two individuals, not between a corporation (or church) and others. Thus Malachi 3:10 should not be quoted to fleece the congregation. The plea is sometimes, "Give to us so that we can minister to the poor," but back there in Moses' day, an individual did his own ministering to the poor. Many principles are improperly extrapolated from the Law to take advantage of and prey upon the conscience of the congregation. The people are made to feel obligated to contribute, whereas any giving should be a freewill offering with the individual feeling *he* is opening wide his hand to another person, not to a church.

**Deut. 15:11** For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

Verse 11 reminds us of Jesus' words in Matthew 26:11, "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."

**Deut. 15:12** And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

The translators indicate with a paragraph mark that verse 12 starts a different perspective. The previous subject was the poor. Now the subject changes to a bought Hebrew servant.

**Q:** Did these seven years commence at the time the servant was bought and not on a fixed calendar date?

**A:** Yes.

**Comment:** The previous case was a poor individual who needed a loan. Here the person had gotten into such a state of poverty that he needed to sell himself into slavery.

**Reply:** Yes, and as a purchased servant, he got provisions for his daily needs. The master of the household was responsible for his care and keeping during the six years.

Verse 12 distinctly mentions a "Hebrew man" and a "Hebrew woman." Previously, the interpretation could have been limited to a male, but as we reach this verse with its minutiae of detail, we find that the Law lost sight of nothing. Not everything is expressed in one verse because there are so many ramifications and extrapolations, but as we go verse by verse, we glean other details and get the ABC's of the fundamentals. When we later study Deuteronomy on our own, we can bring the details together in a more succinct fashion. The point is that the "poor," mentioned earlier, included women. Also, the "poor" were loaned money based on the calendar years, whereas here the years began to count with the *specific* year in which the individual was purchased.

**Deut. 15:13** And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

When the time for release came at the end of the six years, the master was to free the servant with “severance pay,” as it were, to tide him over until he got security in another situation. He was not to go away empty-handed.

**Comment:** The servant was entitled to something when he or she was released by the master at the end of six years.

**Reply:** Yes, for during those six years, he had not been receiving money that he could store up. In late chapters of Deuteronomy, we can go back to these verses, and a fuller understanding will come out.

**Comment:** If the master sent the servant out with nothing, the individual would have to sell himself to another master.

**Reply:** Yes, he would be in the same situation. If he went back to the same household where the poverty existed initially, the situation could be even worse by this time. The Lord wanted the master to have an interest in and a care for the individual. We are just beginning to scratch the surface of God’s very comprehensive Law. Later we will see that the Law was perfect as initially given, but it was disannulled by different types of interpretation and the twisting of Scriptures to mean something not intended.

**Deut. 15:14** **Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.**

The “floor” was the granary. At the end of six years, the servant left with food from the granary and the winepress, as well as with flocks for milk, meat, and clothing. He was to be comfortably released with generosity in proportion as the Lord had blessed the master as an individual and head of a household or family. In other words, if the master had large flocks, he could be proportionately more generous. Moreover, he could take into consideration whether or not the servant had rendered diligent service or had cut corners. All of these ramifications entered the equation, but they could not be expressed in one verse.

**Comment:** Verse 11, with regard to the poor, said the lender should open his hand wide, that is, be generous. The New Testament expresses this principle, saying that the rich are to do good so that they will be “rich in good works, ready to distribute, [and] willing to communicate [to be generous and ready to share—NASB]” (1 Tim. 6:18). Christian giving should be done generously, not grudgingly and stingily.

**Reply:** Yes, an open hand, liberality, and generosity are synonymous terms. The truth, God’s Word, is also a commodity that can be shared not only in our own fellowship but also with others who have not yet entered into covenant relationship with Jesus Christ under God. We consecrate to God through Jesus, recognizing him as God’s dear Son. This distinction was not clearly manifested until Jesus’ First Advent, for he brought to light life and immortality; that is, he brought further understanding of truth. Jesus’ mission as the servant and Son of God was one thing, but God is the Giver and Source of every good and perfect gift in the final analysis.

**Comment:** These are all godly principles because the Israelites were forgiven and given much as a people. In one parable, a man who was forgiven 10,000 talents turned around and refused to forgive one who owed him 100 pence. Moses spoke the words in Deuteronomy 40 years after the Israelites were released out of Egypt. The larger principle is that the Heavenly Father was generous with them, so He expected their hearts to be soft toward their own brethren.

**Reply:** Yes, this long discourse by Moses of what God had taught him to tell Israel occurred shortly before they crossed the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full. With their sinful, immoral practices including human sacrifices—and even babies in some of the most gruesome, unbelievable types of worship of their false god—Jehovah capitalized on their iniquity to time the Israelites' entry into the land. Thus there was justification for putting the Amorites to death, for their iniquity was increasing and the contaminating influence was spreading abroad. When the Israelites conquered the Amorites, the granaries were full because of the time of year. The Israelites received goods, land they had not cultivated, and houses they had not built. In other words, they were given a good start. God practiced what He preaches for us to do. He was generous to the Israelites, who came out of the Wilderness of Sinai with very little of this world's goods. They got a liberal start with flocks, grains, and food, let alone houses.

This account helps us to understand why it is profitable for us, as Christians, who are not under the Law, to study that Law as part of God's Word. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). As followers of Jesus Christ, we are more obligated to follow his instructions and those of his apostles for our salvation, but nevertheless, the Law is enlightening and helpful.

We would like to call attention to several verses in this chapter. "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release" (verse 1). "The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand" (verse 9). "And if thy brother ... be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee" (verse 12). "It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years" (verse 18). Each time period is confirmed. Verse 1 is confirmed by verse 9, for both speak of the seventh year. Verses 12 and 18 both refer to six years. And Deuteronomy 31:10 is still another confirmation of the seven years: "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles." Almost all Bible scholars, both Jewish and Christian, are rather quiet on the application of verse 1. They mention the sabbatical year but do not emphasize "the *end*" of the seventh year, which is the focus of attention. The end of the sixth year is the beginning of the seventh year. Thus two ends of the year of release are mentioned, the "beginning" end and the "ending" end. That distinction is not brought out by the scholars. We will explore the antitype for the Christian in the discussion of verse 18.

**Deut. 15:15** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.

The Israelites were to remember that they were formerly bondmen in the land of Egypt and that God had redeemed them in a marvelous fashion. Moses added, "Therefore I command thee this thing today [in verses 16-18]."

**Comment:** Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses drummed the thought into the heads of the Israelites that they were to remember their former servitude in Egypt.

**Reply:** Yes, they were not to forget the galling experience they had gone through. The master was to be merciful to the servant, who was in a similar situation. Having chafed under Egyptian bondage, the Israelites should have learned a lesson—they should have learned *what not to do to others*.

**Deut. 15:16** And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee;

**Deut. 15:17** Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.

“If he [the servant] say unto thee [the master], I will not go away from thee; ... Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever.” The servant would do this “because he loveth thee [the master] and thine house, [and] because he is well with thee.”

**Comment:** Verses 16 and 17 picture consecration for several reasons. (1) The agreement to serve is binding forever. (2) The agreement is a freewill offering. (3) The servant loves the master and the master’s house.

**Reply:** Yes, the awl being put through the ear pictures consecration.

**Q:** In antitype, the Christian should remember his situation prior to consecration when he was under bondage to sin and death. Can we extrapolate the lesson that we should give liberty to our brethren?

**A:** Yes, and there is another application as well. The awl being put through the ear represents a yoke of bondage to Christ. Not only should the bondage to “Egypt” always be kept in remembrance, with respect both to ourselves and to others who are considering consecration, but also the seriousness of the vow should be kept in mind. Jesus said that one who is considering consecration should sit down and count the cost (Luke 14:28). The individual should examine himself, asking, “Do I have faith that God will be on my side and help me to overcome?” Consecration is to be a freewill offering. Unfortunately, many rush people into consecration today, thus jeopardizing a person’s eternal future if he does not consider what consecration actually is. The person should sit down and count the cost to be sure he really means business. He realizes he is weak, but he must also realize the Lord’s strength. In other words, instead of rushing people into consecration, we should try to encourage them to make that decision of their own free will. For the best long-term interest of the individual, no peer pressure should be involved.

**Q:** The slave did not want to leave because he loved his master and the master’s house. The marginal reference is Exodus 21:5,6, which reads, “And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.” Does the master’s “house” include the servant’s own family, who were not free to be released?

**A:** Yes.

**Comment:** Jesus said he was “the door of the sheep” (John 10:7). Thus the “door” of verse 17 represents Jesus in antitype, through whom our consecration is accepted.

**Reply:** Yes. In addition, there were two houses: the house of Moses and the house of Christ (Heb. 3:5,6). The vow of consecration is to serve the “master,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

The awl, the instrument that pierced the ear, pictures the agency of the Holy Spirit. If one has the desire to serve the Lord Jesus and make a consecration vow, the Holy Spirit enters into the contractual relationship by piercing the heart. In purchasing the world, Jesus purchased the consecrated too. In realizing what he did for us, we felt that he deserved our heart *now* rather than waiting until the next age to consecrate. A consecration vow that is made with the whole heart is acceptable to the Lord. The Father uses the agency of the Holy Spirit to do the drawing.



The “ear” represents our hearing, our hearkening, which are synonyms for obedience.

The Scriptures liken the Christian to a servant in several places. For example, in some of his epistles, Paul called himself and the brethren servants of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1; 6:22; 1 Cor. 7:22; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1). The Book of Revelation begins, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his *servants* things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his *servant* John” (Rev. 1:1). The consecrated are servants of both God and Jesus. In the Parable of the Pounds and the Parable of the Talents, Jesus called his followers “servants” (Matt. 25:14; Luke 19:12,13).

Notice that Moses brought in both male and female servants (verse 17). While most Scriptures use the male perspective, we are occasionally reminded that the consecrated include females. From one standpoint, we are sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father. From another standpoint, we are all sons. And in the finished picture, all will be female as the Bride of Christ.

**Comment:** Exodus 21:6, already read, tells that the master brought the servant to the judges before boring his ear through with an awl. In the type, the contract took place before judges. The antitype is the public immersion before witnesses that follows consecration.

**Reply:** Having the ear pierced and a ring put through the hole was a public declaration or testimony. Now the individual was a servant of a particular household forever.

**Comment:** The ring kept the pierced hole from closing up. Hence the consecration was kept in remembrance. If the ring was removed, the hole closed up. The antitype would be one who draws back unto perdition and loses his Spirit begettal.

**Reply:** Persecution is a confirmation or evidence that one’s consecration is in good standing and that he is pleasing the Heavenly Father. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Thus persecution should be viewed as an encouragement.

**Deut. 15:18** It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

“It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee”; that is, a master should send a servant away not grudgingly but willingly. The proper disposition of both the master and the servant is indicated in verse 18. If the individual served well, he “hath been worth a double hired servant” for six years. Obedience should be predicated on *loving* to do God’s will, not on service that is rendered grudgingly out of duty.

**Comment:** For six years, the individual served well, day and night, and thus helped to increase the wealth of his master. Now the master should let the servant go with good wishes. If the master obeyed in this matter, God would bless him mightily.

Normally, the number “six” represents incompleteness down here on earth when compared to “seven” as sacred completion. In antitype, the end of six years pictures this side of the veil at the *beginning* of the Gospel Age, and the end of seven years represents the *end* of the Gospel Age as far as the Christian is concerned. Those who get life will have either everlasting life in the spirit realm or immortality and the divine nature. For the unconsecrated world of mankind, the end of six years represents when they are awakened from death. When they come forth from the tomb, the prior earthly experience of six “days” of labor will be behind them. Now they will enter into the seventh year, which is a rest period, a newness, a beginning, in which they walk up the highway of holiness. At the end of seven years, those who pass the test of the

Little Season will get everlasting human life. Thus there is a dual application.

**Comment:** We are reminded of Laban's attitude toward Jacob. After Jacob served him willingly for a number of years, Laban did not want to let him go.

**Reply:** Laban did not want to free him openhandedly.

**Deut. 15:19** All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

In this fifteenth chapter, verses 1-6 pertain to the release of a debt, which makes a big difference in the antitype. God's interest was shown in the poor who were in debt for goods, property, or money (the land belonged to God). Verses 7-11 have to do with an individual, a human being, and so do verses 12-18. Verses 19-23 pertain to the male firstling (firstborn) of a flock or herd. Keeping these distinctions in mind helps us not to muddle applications.

All of the male firstlings of a herd or flock had to be sanctified to Jehovah. No work was to be done with these animals, nor could the sheep be sheared.

God's Law is concentrated like an acorn; it is deeper than any of us and more perfect than the Grace Covenant for the Christian, which shows God's mercy. The Father can be merciful to us because of the fact Jesus died to cancel Adamic sin. The Gospel Age is an exception of grace, whereas God's Law is perfect in every respect in a strict form of justice. Many Christians look at the perfect Law disparagingly, but we are what is imperfect. Thank God, He arranged a plan to deal with us whereby we have communication with Him through the grace arrangement.

**Deut. 15:20** Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household.

As a general rule, the male firstling was to be eaten at either the Tabernacle or the Temple, not at one's home. Verses 21 and 22 list the exception.

**Deut. 15:21** And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.

**Deut. 15:22** Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart.

**Deut. 15:23** Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

If the male firstling was blemished, being lame, blind, or diseased, it could not be offered at the Tabernacle or the Temple and was to be eaten at home ("within thy gates"). Moreover, a male firstling could not be eaten while the blood was in it. The antitypical lesson is that our consecration vow should be made wholeheartedly without any strings attached. We are to serve God with *all* our heart, mind, soul, and strength. However, with other types of vows, it is permissible to state reservations.

As hunted animals, the roebuck and the hart were usually blemished and also had blood in them. Thus they were not acceptable as offerings, but they could be eaten. Israel had to give to the Lord that which was the best. God came first.

**Comment:** Our consecration should be sincere and wholehearted until death.

**Reply:** The Apostle Paul reasoned that we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Of course we are imperfect, but we should try to be on our best behavior both outwardly and inwardly. Paul had a blemish with his eyesight, but he served God and Christ in an exemplary way. We are humbled when we think of Jesus or Paul.

**Comment:** Verse 21 reminds us of Malachi 1:8,13, which tells that the Israelites offered blind and lame animals for sacrifice. “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.... Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.”

**Reply:** Yes. In other words, the Israelites did what should not have been done.

“Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.” Some reverent Bible scholars have commented that when the Israelites were going to eat these animals at their own homes, they were required to *ceremoniously* drain the blood, pouring it out like water. Stated another way, the blood was not to be drained in a sloppy fashion. When the animal was drained of the blood to make it kosher, the blood was to be *collected* in a vessel and then poured on the ground. In other words, the Israelites were not to just hang the animal up, cut its throat, and let the blood go on the ground. The blood was to be treated in a respectful manner, with the recognition that it was normally to be poured out like water in a strict ceremonial fashion at the altar.

**Comment:** Leviticus 17:10,11a reads, “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood.”

**Reply:** These were strict regulations under the Law for natural Israel. The same principle will be applicable under the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age. We can understand the initial horror when Jesus said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). Many of the Jews departed at this hard saying. When Jesus asked his apostles, “Will ye also go away?” Peter’s response was rather moving: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:67,68). Peter’s reply was the substance of *faith*. Similarly, many of the Ancient Worthies were probably puzzled about all of the blood and the stench with the thousands of animal sacrifices, but they had *faith* that God had a reason. Faith seems to prosper when doubt arises, yet the proper stand is taken and the individual goes forward. Such experiences develop spiritual muscles. Those who give up are not of the material the Lord is looking for. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

**Deut. 16:1** Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

**Deut. 16:2** Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

**Deut. 16:3** Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt

**in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.**

**Deut. 16:4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.**

**Deut. 16:5 Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee:**

**Deut. 16:6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.**

**Deut. 16:7 And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.**

**Deut. 16:8 Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.**

Verses 1-8 are a review of the Feast of Passover. Most of this sixteenth chapter is introductory to Moses' warning to the nation of Israel, which starts at the end of the chapter and goes on into chapter 17. Everything Moses warned Israel not to do, they did. By reviewing the three major feasts the Israelites were to observe—Passover (Unleavened Bread), Pentecost (Weeks), and Tabernacles (Ingathering, Succoth, Harvest)—Moses was laying the basis for going back to the old paths. As the mediator of the Law Covenant, Moses was fulfilling the responsibility God had charged him with.

The month of Abib was the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, whereas the latter part of September and the beginning of October were later recognized as the start of the civil year. The beginning of the ecclesiastical year has a special application to the Gospel Age, and the antitypical emphasis of the civil year, which started with the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Harvest (or Tabernacles), is the Kingdom Age.

Moses reminded the Israelites that they were once in bondage in Egypt and that they came out by night in a miraculous fashion. First came the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Passover), which antitypically started with Pentecost. The Passover sacrifice itself pertained particularly to Jesus' role in connection with the sin offering. His sacrifice introduced Pentecost, the beginning of the Gospel Age as it pertained to the Church. If those seven days represent the entire Gospel Age, we begin to see that Moses was laying a foundation to give his real discourse subsequently. He had already explained the Passover in great detail in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, so here he was summarizing.

One comparison with the Gospel Age is that the Israelites ate unleavened bread. Sacrificing was to be done in the place the Lord God chose, which was Jerusalem. Thus the stage was being set for what was really burdening Moses. The focus of attention was on Jerusalem, the capital. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten in Jerusalem.

Verse 8 states, "Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread." During these six days, the Israelites were under labor. On the preceding day, they killed the Passover lamb. All numbers from 1 to 13 picture completeness, but each has a particular perspective in mind. Paul said, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7,8). From this standpoint, we start the Passover with this period

of six days. The “six days” represent something being done down here in the flesh during the Gospel Age. The Antichrist number is 666 (Rev. 13:18). “Six” is actually a holy number, but it has been abused and fraudulently taken by the Roman Catholic Church with the pope assuming the role of Christ. The measuring rod for the Temple and the sanctuary complex was the measure of Christ down here; that is, it was the measure of the stature of the man Christ Jesus. We are to measure up as best we can. Our consecrated lives are devoted to walking in the footsteps of Jesus, following his example to the best of our ability. The number 6 is also used in connection with the Tabernacle, for the cubit is 18 inches, a multiple of 6. Thus six is a holy number, with Antichrist being the counterfeit Christ.

Abib and Nisan both refer to the first month of the ecclesiastical year. Abib is the Hebrew name, whereas Nisan was the Chaldean name used in Babylonian captivity.

**Comment:** Young’s *Analytical Concordance* states that Nisan is the name of the Babylonian god of spring.

Despite all of his admonitions, Moses knew the Israelites would not keep the Law. The clue to Moses’ knowing about the future disobedience is Leviticus 26, which repeatedly mentions the seven times of punishment that would come upon the Israelites (Lev. 26:18,21,24,28). Time and time again they would depart from the admonitions of God, go into captivity, be rescued, and start over with a new judge, only to depart again, etc. The Lord warned that if they did not obey, seven more times of punishment would come. Now Moses was faithfully discharging his stewardship by refreshing the Israelites’ minds on what they had been told to do in the past.

**Deut. 16:9** Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.

**Deut. 16:10** And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

**Deut. 16:11** And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

**Deut. 16:12** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

In verses 9-12, Moses repeated “in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name.” The seven weeks began to count when the sickle was put to the corn (verse 9). The wave offering, which pictured Jesus’ resurrection, was offered on the 16th day of Abib/Nisan. Seven weeks (7 days x 7) pointed out the 50th day, which was Pentecost.

**Deut. 16:13** Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:

**Deut. 16:14** And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

**Deut. 16:15** Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine

**increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.**

The early grains were harvested in the beginning of the year, and other grains and the fruit of the trees were harvested about six months later, shortly before the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Deut. 16:16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:**

**Deut. 16:17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.**

The males were to appear before Jehovah in Jerusalem three times a year, that is, for the three feasts just mentioned. When they appeared, they were to bring an offering “according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.”

**Deut. 16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.**

**Deut. 16:19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.**

**Deut. 16:20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.**

Verse 18 was an instruction to have local courts that were convenient to the Israelites in their various locales. Stated another way, they were to have jurisdiction over cases where infringements of the Law occurred or where people wanted to voice their complaints and justify their rights.

A common saying is that money talks. In other words, bribes are effectual in blinding the eye. Jesus called money the mammon of this world and told the Christian to make friends with mammon by being kind and generous to friends and neighbors as their need is seen (Luke 16:9). We should try to think kindly of others and do to them that which is exemplary and good. Such attitudes should be part of our own makeup.

The Israelites were to do that which was just so that they would live and inherit the land God had given them. Of course the Christian hopes to inherit the heavenly land up above, but he makes friends with mammon down here to be a good influence.

**Deut. 16:21 Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.**

**Deut. 16:22 Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.**

Now Moses started to speak about the crux of the matter. In both type and antitype, a departure into idol worship took place. Chapter 16 should have ended with verse 20, for verses 21 and 22 more properly belong to chapter 17. Verse 21 was a prohibition against planting a grove of trees near an altar of sacrifice. This prohibition included private altars at the Israelites' homes, where they could offer subsidiary sacrifices.

Anciently, a common international practice was to have groves (or a building) around altars. God gave the prohibition because immoral acts took place under the trees and thus were

associated with the altars. In Rome, the practice of having a brothel near the temple of worship was referred to as vestal virgins. To show reverence for a (false) god, each of the nobility dedicated a daughter to serve as a prostitute for one year in order to bring income to the temple. The money raised through prostitution was supposed to make the sacrifices of the nobility more acceptable. A parallel is the practice of the confessional in the Roman Catholic Church whereby one can do almost anything and then receive forgiveness by paying for a Mass and making a sizable contribution. Violating God's prohibition led to terrible abuses in the nation of Israel along natural lines and to fornication and immorality in Christian churches along both natural and spiritual lines. Covering over sin with forgiveness was done under the mantle of love and mercy. The individual had to go through a process but felt that paying for forgiveness was worth the expenditure.

In the type, rival places of worship were set up in Dan and Beth-el. In the antitype, counterfeit worship is centered in Rome. As the Apostle Paul said, the things that happened to Israel are examples for us (1 Cor. 10:11). Catering to the flesh has been one of the most successful tools of the Adversary. Satan has been able to ensnare many good souls, from the most ignorant to the most educated, by appealing to the flesh. In Ephesus, for example, footprint markers were intentionally put in the pavement to direct visitors to the outhouse and the upstairs brothel.

**Deut. 17:1** Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

No blemished animal was ever to be sacrificed to Jehovah. What lessons can be extrapolated?

**Comment:** An indirect lesson is that no one descended from Adam could pay the ransom price.

**Comment:** In antitype, the Christian has consecrated his all, so he cannot withhold part of the sacrifice.

**Reply:** Yes, the Christian must fully sacrifice his fleshly nature.

**Q:** What is the distinction between a "blemish" and "evilfavouredness"?

**A:** A blemish was a visible fault, and "evilfavouredness" referred to an animal that was visibly perfect but had an ornery disposition.

**Deut. 17:2** If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

**Deut. 17:3** And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

**Deut. 17:4** And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel:

**Deut. 17:5** Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.

The Israelites were not to worship the literal sun, moon, or stars, whereas the warning to the Christian is not to worship the servants of the truth. Respect for and cognition of individuals who are used of the Lord are proper, but they should not be worshipped. For example, there is

a tendency among the brethren to equate what the Pastor said with Scripture no matter what the statement, whereas it is incumbent upon each of us to search the Scriptures to see whether a statement is true.

**Comment:** In verses 2-7, the emphasis is more on the one who hears that a sin was committed than on the one who did the sin. “And [when] it [a sin] be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain,” the Israelite was to make it known. The same is true of the Christian in the Gospel Age.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the main thrust. Reading these verses reminds us of Leviticus 5:1, “And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.” The hearer has a responsibility to make the matter known. If he cannot do anything personally, he should bring the matter to those who can. Christians who faithfully call attention to such matters are not popular, generally speaking. Instead they are brought into disrepute, for others think they have an evil or faultfinding spirit. Those in the world usually have the attitude that one should never snitch on another person, but under the Law, it was mandatory to report a sin of a grievous nature lest one incur the death penalty by remaining silent.

**Comment:** Leviticus 5:1 reads as follows in the Holman Christian Study Bible: “When someone sins in any of these ways, if he has seen, heard, or known about something he has witnessed and did not respond to a public call to testify, he is guilty.”

**Comment:** The scribes and Pharisees should have known that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, for this principle was taught in the Law.

**Comment:** Because sin was tolerated, the nation of Israel was eventually destroyed.

**Reply:** Yes, a study of the Book of Jeremiah, for instance, reveals some of the heinous acts committed and tolerated in the nation of Israel.

**Comment:** When a proper criticism is made, many brethren prefer not to understand the matter. They would rather let the matter slide than carry it to a conclusion.

**Reply:** Yes, they are silent, not responsive. Much of Deuteronomy has a practical value in the Christian life and character.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 13, as well as this chapter, shows how Jehovah felt about those who abandoned the true worship for the worship of false gods. He feels the same way today as when the commandments were first issued. Deuteronomy 13:8,9 states, “Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.” Today this principle is not given much thought if a brother or sister in Christ goes and worships other gods, but our responsibility is to excommunicate the individual and not conceal the fact out of pity or some other emotion.

**Reply:** Yes, although we are not under the Law and thus are not responsible for the literal performance of the punishment, the principles of the perfect divine Law remain the same forever. We incur proportionate responsibility and guilt according to our response or lack of response. Under the Law, one’s own hand had to throw the first stone in cases of grievous sin even within a family, for instance, a parent to a child or a child to a parent. In other words, the family relationship was not to prejudice judgment. Friendship can be dangerous if one goes



astray. We must be careful to obey the Lord rather than our feelings.

**Q:** Today how would we apply the sin of idolatry, of going and serving other gods?

**A:** There are numerous applications. These principles should be guidelines for our conscience, helping us to know how to react under certain circumstances. Although we are not literally under the Law, God is judging us on these principles. Certainly if we are to be judges in the next age, we should be somewhat familiar with these principles. “See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil,” illustrated by three monkeys, is contrary to God’s Law. All of the consecrated have a responsibility to uphold God’s righteous principles, and those in positions of influence or leadership have proportionately more responsibility. The entire Law has to be studied, for it is very comprehensive. For example, if an ornery animal is not fenced in, the owner is responsible for any harm done—especially if someone calls attention to the fact there is no fence. We should think on the literal requirements of the Law so that our conscience will be educated. The Lord is examining us to see how we react under each circumstance. We should not become spiritual policemen, however, always looking for problems and deluding ourselves into thinking we are doing a good thing. The danger is that we will not feed on the lilies and the flowers which develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We should pray to God for common sense, for no matter how intellectual we are, we need God’s Holy Spirit to guide us in a given circumstance (James 1:5).

**Deut. 17:6** At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

**Deut. 17:7** The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

The one who first observes the waywardness is responsible for putting the perpetrator to death. It would be hard for a parent to throw the first stone at his young child who had cursed him, but that was the requirement of the Law. Of course the nature of the curse had to be examined too. Unfortunately, many think it is not profitable for the Christian to study the Law. *Worldly* thinking says the God of the Law is cruel and too severe. The tendency is to praise Jesus but not the Father. There is a failure to realize the beauty and the goodness of the Law—that it represents perfection. Of course we cannot live up to that perfection, but God watches our endeavors.

**Comment:** One witness was not sufficient under the Law to put a person to death, and neither is one witness sufficient in the Gospel Age to excommunicate an individual.

**Reply:** Yes, two or three witnesses are needed whether pro or con.

**Comment:** We have discussed situations where the principle of stoning is properly applied, but it was misapplied with Stephen (Acts 7:57,58). “Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” The witnesses were false and acted contrary to the righteous principles of God and truth.

**Reply:** The Apostle Paul probably did not throw one stone in that incident. Nevertheless, he received retribution because he consented at heart and Stephen’s stoning was willfully done. Not only was Paul a witness, but he kept the garments of the false witnesses so the stones could be thrown harder. Paul himself was stoned to death at least once as retribution.

**Comment:** One purpose of the action described in verse 7 was to prick the conscience of a false

witness. In other words, the blood would be upon a false witness for using his hands to throw the stone. Conversely, if the witness was true, the individual was righteous to throw the stone.

**Reply:** At present, many would frown upon the thought of stoning an individual to death.

**Comment:** For anyone who justly suffered this penalty in the present life, his slate would be considered clean in the resurrection.

**Reply:** Yes, his sin would be overlooked because he had already paid the penalty. Those who are guilty of, let us say, premeditated murder and get a life sentence have not necessarily received the full penalty. In cases of partial retribution, a further penalty will be given in the Kingdom. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (1 Tim. 5:24).

**Comment:** The report had to be true. It could not be a misunderstanding, an exaggeration, or a rumor. Before action was taken, the truthfulness of the report had to be certified.

**Reply:** Yes, that was (and is) the purpose of the court system.

When a person harmed another individual literally or figuratively, he had to go through a process in order to have the slate wiped clean. Not only did he have to confess to God, but also he had to go to the individual he had injured. For example, the three comforters had to go to Job and ask for his forgiveness before God would forgive them. In the Kingdom Age, those who have persecuted saints down through the Gospel Age will have to, in one form or another, go to the foot of the one(s) they harmed and beg for forgiveness. To the best of their ability, they will have to communicate sorrow and remorse to the one they wronged before the process of redemption, reformation, and healing can take place.

**Comment:** If a brother has aught against us, we are to go to him and be reconciled before we bring our offering to the altar (Matt. 5:23,24).

**Deut. 17:8** If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;

Verses 8-11 show the process of examination and judgment. Assistance was rendered when a case became too difficult for the parties concerned to know how to properly apply justice. "Between blood and blood" referred to murder, "between plea and plea" was a legal dispute, and "between stroke and stroke" was assault. To a certain extent, our court system tries to decide cases with all kinds of witnesses, but in some cases, the judge inhibits this type of proper examination by setting guidelines of judgment and parameters within which the jury must operate in making their decision. Therefore, who the judge is in a particular case becomes very important with regard to the witnesses and the presentation of details. Is the presentation biased or strictly literal, as far as possible, without the addition of fabricated details?

**Q:** How would this kind of situation be moved forward into church matters?

**A:** Matthew 18:15-17 is the counterpart. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen

man and a publican.” If, after obtaining witnesses, the guilty party does not confess his sin, the trespass is taken to the congregation for judgment. Elders hear the case to make sure the criticism is proper, that is, to determine whether it is worthy of examination. If the guilty party does not repent and do the proper thing, he is excommunicated from the congregation. Unfortunately, Matthew 18:15-17 is sometimes used when another procedure fits the situation because of the obvious facts of occurrence. The Matthew 18 text is usually appropriate when matters are not understood, when the facts are covered or silent.

**Q:** Aside from Matthew 18 or 1 Corinthians 5, situations are sometimes very muddy, which seems to be the implication here in Deuteronomy. In such cases, where individuals were not able to make a determination, the matter was taken to the judges. If we are unclear today with regard to a determination, what action should be taken?

**A:** One method is sincere prayer for instruction from on high, and even fasting if necessary. In cases that are so confused, no one down here can solve the situation, but prayer would perhaps result in a fact being providentially revealed to assist in the judgment. Back there in the wilderness, the hardest cases were taken to Moses. Moses appointed 70 judges to give advice, but he said to them, “If a case arises that is too hard for you, bring the matter to me.” Of course he represented Jesus in that application. The antitype applies more to the Kingdom Age than to the Gospel Age; however, at the present time, we extrapolate principles that apply to the future under the New Covenant. Stated another way, the principles of the old Law Covenant will operate in the Kingdom but in a better fashion because Jesus will be a better Mediator and the Church will be the judges. Their decisions will be accurate and revealing. Nevertheless, the principle is shown here that one must be careful not to punish an innocent person. Because of appearance or circumstance, an innocent person might appear to be guilty.

Today muddy conditions sometimes mean a split in the class, and if necessary, so be it. However, each case must be considered separately as it occurs and an attempt made to solve it because certain cases have peculiar circumstances.

**Deut. 17:9** And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment:

The antitypical application of Leviticus chapters 1-7 is the Kingdom Age as it is here with the Levites and the judge. Nevertheless, a study of the principles is beneficial to us, for in studying God’s Law, we actually see His character and His thinking about certain situations. If we want to be more in harmony with the Father, we need to be as much like Him as possible. We are to try to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. That ambition, thrust, and burning desire in our life helps us to do things better than if we did not have that interest in pleasing God.

“They shall show thee the sentence of judgment.” In the Kingdom Age, what is right will be seen, whereas now everything is by faith. We just have to do the best we can and keep our conscience sensitive to what is right. “The end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a *good conscience*, and of faith unfeigned [a sincere faith]” (1 Tim. 1:5). We are living in a time when false love and insincere faith are prevalent. Three goals, or steps, we want to have are a pure conscience, an undissembled faith, and Godlike love.

**Deut. 17:10** And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee:

**Deut. 17:11** According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the

**sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.**

“Thou shalt do according to the sentence ... of the law,” whose principles we are supposed to be taught. Former Chief Justice Warren of the U.S. Supreme Court publicly disclosed he felt it was his duty to study God’s Law, for such a study would better qualify him for his position.

“Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.”

**Comment:** Once we know what the Lord’s will is, we must follow it exactly without innovations or shortcuts.

**Reply:** Yes. The decisions can be difficult, but they make or break us as far as being of the Little Flock. We do not have to be intellectuals. What is important is to do the best we can, and we are not all the same. We have different temperaments and mental and moral capabilities and talents, but we are responsible for what we have and can do. God is the Judge in the final analysis. Generally speaking, we are not to look at others and say they should have done this or that, for we do not know all of the circumstances. Perhaps an individual did more than we think. The instructions on judgment in Deuteronomy 17 are very sobering. We need both joy and sobriety in our Christian walk, both sunshine and winter experiences for our development.

**Comment:** Many problems with the consecrated revolve around marriage and doing things that are not profitable for our spiritual welfare. Our home ecclesia should be thought of as a court. We are going to a destination where we will not have our current personal friends and family gathered around us to give support.

**Reply:** The “court” helps to instruct the individual who brings up a problem for justice to be done. The petitioner may be right or wrong depending on the facts and the principles. The court ideally reveals who is responsible and what needs to be done. Matters should be brought to a head and not just ignored. Unfortunately, most cases are avoided rather than dealt with.

**Deut. 17:12** And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

**Deut. 17:13** And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

The word “presumptuously” is used twice in verses 12 and 13. “And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest ... or unto the judge ... shall die.... And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.” Both aspects of the Kingdom are brought in with “priest” and “judge,” the sacred and the common, respectively.

**Q:** *Strong’s Concordance* defines “presumptuous” as “arrogant.” Do these verses refer to someone who acts out of his own arrogance rather than obeying the priest or the judge?

**A:** The dictionary definition is correct. However, we normally use the term “willful.” Willful sin is presumptuous sin in the final analysis. David prayed that God would keep him from presumptuous sins (Psa. 19:13).

**Comment:** Verse 11 stated the strictness of the obedience that was required under the old Law Covenant: “Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, [not deviating] to the right hand, nor to the left.”

**Reply:** Yes, the purpose was to “put away the evil from Israel.”

**Comment:** Verses 12 and 13 are similar in principle to Malachi 4:5,6, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Because the people will not hearken to the message of the last members of the Church, the great Time of Trouble will come.

**Deut. 17:14** When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

**Deut. 17:15** Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

**Comment:** Verses 14 and 15 show God’s foreknowledge of Israel’s disobedience. The people should have been content with their judges and not asked for a king.

**Reply:** Of course disobedience will not be tolerated in the Kingdom Age, the antitype, but will be punished immediately.

**Comment:** It seems rather peculiar that the Hebrew word for “king” is *melek*. In disobedience, the Israelites would set a “Molech” over themselves just like the heathen nations.

**Reply:** No doubt there is a slight slant to the pronunciation of the word “Molech,” just as there is with the word “Babylon.” Another example is the Hebrew word *cherem*, which can mean either something sacred, something consecrated to Jehovah, or an accursed thing depending on the slightest variation in vowels.

**Comment:** The Pastor commented on the difference between having judges and having a king. “Judges developed the Israelites individually. The kingdom tended to develop them along national lines. The individual judgment better prepared the people for the coming of Messiah.” With judges, the point of view was more personal, but the people did not like personal responsibility.

**Reply:** There will be both a king and judges in the Kingdom Age. Jesus will have supreme and sole authority, and judges (the Little Flock) will provide individual judgment. In addition, the Ancient Worthies will make pronouncements on the earthly plane. God has promised, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning” (Isa. 1:26).

**Comment:** Knowing Israel would disobey and ask for a king, God made provision in advance through Moses. In verse 15, He added the safeguard that the king had to be one of their own.

Verse 15 is probably what the scribes and Pharisees had in mind when they said to Jesus, “Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?” If Jesus said no, they could condemn him to Caesar, and if he said yes, they could use verse 15 to condemn him. However, Jesus perceived their craftiness and completely separated himself from the trap. He said, “Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription are on the coin?” When they answered, “Caesar’s,” he replied, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s” (Luke 20:22-25). Jesus masterfully extricated himself from what would have been a real conundrum. His wisdom was very manifest on that occasion.

**Deut. 17:16** But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

**Deut. 17:17** Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

**Comment:** Verses 16 and 17 invoke images of Solomon, for in almost every point, he disobeyed. Thus these verses prophesied of conditions more than a thousand years in advance.

**Reply:** Imagine living back there and hearing Moses make this pronouncement! We would consider it a prophecy of the future, and it was fulfilled in Israel's Period of the Kings. Today we glean the proper principles of hearkening to whatever the Lord commands us to do or not to do, and we look forward to the fulfillment of prophecies still future in our day.

**Comment:** Moderation instead of multiplication is one principle.

**Comment:** The prohibition of the multiplication of horses, wives, silver, and gold to oneself should have resulted in a king who was approachable by the people. The king was not to be a distant monarch who was almost deified.

**Comment:** Since horses constituted armies of strength when a nation went to war, the danger in Israel's having horses was that the army would rely on those animals and the strength of the flesh instead of recognizing God as their strength and security.

**Reply:** Also woven into the account is the thought that the Israelites were not to have commerce with Egypt for fear of contamination. In other words, if the king multiplied horses to himself, this action would "cause the people to return to Egypt" for commerce.

**Comment:** Antotypically, horses picture doctrines, so the lesson is that the Christian should not multiply doctrines outside of Scripture.

**Reply:** Yes, strange doctrines wean Christians away from strict attention to the Lord's doctrines and thus inhibit their growth. Incidentally, there were no horses in Israel at that time, and Egypt was known as the source of horses that would be capable of warfare.

**Comment:** When God took the Israelites out of Egypt, the intent was to have judges, but judgment was to start with one's own family (Deut. 17:2-9). If the case was too hard, it went to a higher level. Similarly in the Kingdom when the people are raised out of the grave, they will come unto their own families.

**Reply:** The Israelites knew the judges were an auxiliary force that God had raised as His agencies in ministering to the nation. Once Israel had a king, other deviations occurred not long after, coming to an obvious manifestation during the reign of Solomon.

**Comment:** Just as God led the Israelites out of Egypt, so at consecration, He leads us out of antitypical Egypt, the world. For us to desire to return to "Egypt" for the garlic, leeks, and onions, thus going back into the world, would be a serious deflection.

**Reply:** We are not to go back into Egypt in the sense of either renegeing on our consecration or returning to the nominal Church.

**Comment:** How amazing that Moses said these things before the Israelites ever entered the

Promised Land! They needed reminders because they forgot God's works (Psa. 106:13,21).

**Reply:** Just as the Israelites forgot, so we can forget too.

**Comment:** In multiplying wives, Solomon "had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:3).

**Reply:** It is startling that King Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines but only one son, Rehoboam (1 Kings 11:43; 1 Chron. 3:10).

**Q:** With Egypt picturing the world and horses being doctrines, we need the simplicity of God's Word, but what would the multiplicity of wives be in antitype? The fact that many of the marriages were the result of political strategies indicates compromise of principle. Do the "wives" represent earthly mortgages? As Christians, we are not to burden ourselves with unnecessary things of this world that would require too much of our time.

**A:** Yes, we should avoid unnecessary earthly alliances and aspirations for wealth, power, or influence—for anything that is time-consuming and takes away from serving the Lord.

**Comment:** The last part of verse 17 states, "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." David amassed a lot of silver, gold, and other materials for the building of the Temple, but because the accumulation was for God, not for himself, it was permissible.

**Deut. 17:18** And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

**Deut. 17:19** And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

**Deut. 17:20** That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

The king was to make a duplicate copy of the Law and keep it with him so that he could read it daily. Thus he would have no excuse for not doing that which was proper.

**Comment:** When the Law was being read to King Josiah, he realized that this practice was not being followed, and he took steps to correct the situation.

**Reply:** Yes, the Law was not readily accessible in Josiah's day. During captivity, the book of the Law was taken by a foreign power and stored in the treasury until Ezra made a copy available to the people by reading it in its entirety on the proper occasion and on a fixed basis thereafter.

Sometimes the Book of Deuteronomy is called not only the "Fifth Book of Moses" but also "The Replication of the Law." Just before Moses' demise, God gave him opportunity to speak what was on his heart, which became the Book of Deuteronomy.

Verse 20 tells why a copy of the Law was to be made available to the king. It was to be a deterrent so that his heart would not be lifted up above those whom he was serving. If he did not turn aside from the commandment, his days might be prolonged, as well as the days of his children. The prolonging of days would help him to establish a character in righteousness if he applied himself, and thus he would be more apt to get everlasting life in the Kingdom Age.

Even if a king had a short reign, to get the future reward of everlasting life on earth would be prolonging his days in a higher sense.

**Comment:** King Hezekiah's days were prolonged, for he was given 15 additional years to live (Isa. 38:5).

**Deut. 18:1** The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.

The Levites were chosen to replace the firstborn of the children of Israel. The transfer was made when the Levites took a stand for the Lord at the time of the golden calf incident. Not only were they rewarded by replacing the firstborn, but also they became a more definitive type by having no inheritance in the land. Of course, spiritually speaking, they represent the called of this age, the Little Flock and the Great Company.

**Q:** Was the tribe of Levi excluded from the punishment of the nation of Israel for disobedience in listening to the unfavorable report of the ten spies and not entering the Promised Land?

**A:** Eleazar, Ithamar, and Phinehas were spared, but they are not included in the picture from an antitypical standpoint.

**Comment:** None of the 12 spies were Levites. The tribes who were represented in the false report were more responsible. Therefore, the Levites seem to have been excluded.

**Reply:** We do not know which Levites were excluded. Since the Levites had to kill fellow members of their own families, many of them could not have entered the land. The account is silent on that point, but we would not be surprised if many of the Levites were infected with the virus that prevailed during the wilderness journey. We can name only a couple of individuals, but they are not really considered in the account, the emphasis being on Joshua and Caleb. Of course later on, some of the Levites certainly entered the Promised Land.

**Deut. 18:2** Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

The Levites had no inheritance in the land. In the antitype, those who are Spirit-begotten in the Gospel Age give up their inheritance in the land (restitution) for the spiritual hope.

**Deut. 18:3** And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

**Q:** Joshua 13:14 reads, "Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as he said unto them." Therefore, were the sacrifices of verse 3 all burnt offerings?

**A:** The sacrifices could have been sin offerings too, for they were also burnt. With burnt offerings, the emphasis was on their being wholly consumed except for the hide and entrails. Notice the wording of verse 1: "They shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire." However, certain offerings "made by fire" could not be eaten, for example, the daily offerings. When the people came as individuals to the Tabernacle to offer sacrifices, those offerings could be eaten.



When the people offered an ox or a sheep, they were to give the priest “the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.” These parts of the animal became the possession of the priest who offered the sacrifice. Since the priesthood rotated, the priest varied with regard to the people’s offerings and was not necessarily the high priest. However, on a holy day or with a particularly important mandatory sacrifice, the high priest had to do the offerings. The individual priest who dealt with the Israelite who brought an ox or a sheep received the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw as a reward. In that way, as the burden of these numerous sacrifices was shared, the animal parts were a means of providing a portion of the priests’ livelihood. The Levites were dependent upon the offerings of the people for their sustenance, especially in the winter months.

On special ceremonial holy days and for the daily sacrifice, the right shoulder had to be given to the priest, but with the people’s offerings, either shoulder could be given. In antitype, the shoulder represents the support and power that the person gives to the “priest.” Zephaniah 3:9 reads, “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent [*shoulder* in the Hebrew].” Thus the “shoulder” signifies “consent” or support, whether figurative, spiritual, or physical.

The “two cheeks,” which pictured the health of the person bringing the offering, probably referred to the cheeks of the head rather than to the hindquarters of an animal. The “maw” included the (first) stomach, or rumen, but additionally pertained inferentially to the mouth, tongue, throat, and esophagus tube that conducts food to the first stomach. Although the emphasis was on the stomach, anything of value as a food or otherwise that was in the passageway to the stomach was included. For example, the first stomach had value as a household container for liquids. The rumen was useful and convenient for carrying fluids such as wine because it was not porous and awkward like a clay jar. The word “maw” seems to be related to the sound that comes from the ox and the sheep. Air from the passage tube produces the sound.

**Q:** Is the antitype of verse 3 more of a Kingdom Age picture, representing what the people will give to the particular member of the 144,000 who is helping them?

**A:** That is correct. The people will give figurative sacrifices. They will serve the Lord with one consent, one shoulder, in that they will be in harmony with the Kingdom arrangement. Obedience will be mandatory.

As Christians, we extrapolate useful principles for the Gospel Age, but the primary application is to the Kingdom Age. The Pastor focused on Leviticus 8, 9, and 16 because they have a particular meaning to the consecrated of the present age, but generally speaking, chapters 1–7 are Kingdom pictures.

**Q:** To put the Israelites’ sacrifices in a nutshell, do they represent the people in the Kingdom giving their support (the “shoulder”), their health and energy (the “two cheeks”), and their praise, respect, etc. (the “maw,” which includes the stomach, mouth, and teeth)?

**A:** Yes.

**Comment:** Hosea 14:1,2 is a similar concept: “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”

**Reply:** That text is a good tie-in because the cheeks culminate in the lips. Praise and obedience come out of the lips. Israel will genuinely return unto Jehovah and utter that prayer. When that

happens, He will answer them as a nation.

**Deut. 18:4** The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

The “firstfruit” of everything—animals, fruits of the trees, goods, and praise—belonged to the Lord. Oil came from the olive tree. The spiritual lesson of verse 4 is that the Christian thinks about God or offers prayer the first thing in the morning.

**Comment:** The point is to give the best of what we have to God.

The manna from heaven, which God supplied for the Israelites while they were in the wilderness, was very unusual. In addition to being like a vitamin pill, it was a concentrated food and a medicine. The manna wonderfully sustained the people, but they got tired of the taste. Their wanting a variety of taste served as a test. They were not satisfied with what God supplied as a necessity for their survival.

**Deut. 18:5** For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.

Out of all the tribes, God chose the Levites to minister unto Him as priests and underpriests. From the antitypical standpoint, the priests’ being rewarded with the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw means that in the Kingdom Age, the priesthood of God, spiritual Zion, will get satisfaction out of dealing with the people, helping to cure them of their sin habits and diseases, and providing for their needs. God will give the Little Flock the ability to help, and they will have the satisfaction of seeing the results of their labor. In the present life, we like to do things well and help others, but sometimes we end up doing harm to individuals or children either by heaping too many goodies on them or by not supplying the proper necessities. Because we are imperfect, we have problems in judgment and other areas. In the Kingdom Age, the Little Flock will have a free hand for dealing with those under their jurisdiction. What joy they will have being in the position to really help and benefit others! They will be perfect kings and priests over their subjects.

With the Israelites in the type, pleasure was given to the priests, the underpriests, and their families, and that pleasure extended down through all of the Levites in the final analysis, as pictured by the sacrifices of verses 3 and 4. In contradistinction, the sacrifices that were wholly consumed on the altar were given to God, rendering praise, honor, and thanksgiving to Him, the Creator. In antitype, the sacrifices of verses 3 and 4 will be given to honor Jesus and his underpriests in the Kingdom Age. After the Kingdom Age, everyone will honor God.

**Deut. 18:6** And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose;

**Deut. 18:7** Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD.

**Comment:** Any Levite who came from one of the Levitical cities to the Tabernacle or Temple with a real heart desire to serve God was to be given a place.

**Reply:** Yes. Normally speaking, a Levite served God in his home territory, but if he wanted to serve more closely at Shiloh or in Jerusalem, that was to be arranged. The lesson is that God is pleased to accept those who are more zealous and desire close fellowship with Him. How could one have close fellowship unless he went to headquarters? Samuel is a good example. Hannah,

his mother, who had the Lord's spirit, dedicated him to Temple service as a child. A spiritual antitype would be Christians who want to serve the Lord full-time, and they go where they can do that. For instance, elders might go to a specific location with the hope of being in the pilgrim service, or brethren might want to do colporteur work from some headquarters. That little extra zeal is very pleasing in God's sight. For those who are so enthusiastic in serving the truth in whatever capacity, an arrangement is made to provide for their hunger and desire. For those who dedicate themselves wholly to the Lord, providence will open up service according to the talent(s) possessed.

**Deut. 18:8** They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

The Roman Catholic Church has misappropriated this verse. When the pope is elected, or chosen, he assigns goodies to the cardinals and makes them patriarchs over various dioceses, which are considered "patrimonies." The goodies are usually doled out to individuals in proportion to the support and influence they gave the pope in his election.

**Comment:** The NIV states, "He [the Levite who left a Levitical city to serve in the Temple] is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions."

**Comment:** The Levites assisted the priests, who received money, animals, and food from the people. The portions given to the priests were to be equally shared with the Levites.

**Deut. 18:9** When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

**Comment:** Historically, Israel had a lot of exposure to the surrounding heathen nations and oftentimes intermarried with them and picked up their practices.

The clause "*thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations*" stands out. There is a limit in trying to exercise supposedly goodwill toward others in allowing them to express their opinions. We must be careful because wrong doctrines are seductive. It is not sufficient to tolerate them and allow them to exist by giving a deaf ear. The danger in being too liberal is that lo and behold, before we know it, the wrong doctrines can become a part of our daily living. The compromising attitude is very dangerous.

**Deut. 18:10** There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

**Comment:** Sons and daughters were passed through the fire in connection with worship of the fire god Molech. "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:21).

An example of "divination" was to look for signs in the entrails of animals. Nebuchadnezzar employed this method in deciding to go to Jerusalem. Another method of divination was to throw sticks up in the air and let them fall to the ground; the shape they took was interpreted by an "expert." There were various methods of looking for signs and wonders in something that was visible. The interpreter did not manipulate the signs but examined what he "found." Stated another way, since the interpreter did not produce the sign, it purportedly came from a superior invisible power.

**Comment:** A recent example is the auction of a cheese sandwich for thousands of dollars because it contained a supposed likeness of the Virgin Mary.

**Reply:** Another example is to look at cumulus clouds and claim to see different types of faces. Tea leaves are sometimes used to prognosticate future events as they pertain to either an individual or a group of people.

An “observer of times” is an astrologer. The date of one’s birthday is considered significant because it is under a particular sign of the zodiac that purportedly determines one’s destiny. Some people make decisions to buy or sell stock according to the date and the sign. For followers of astrology, time and the stars greatly influence business and personal decisions. Such individuals wait for the “propitious moment” of the most favorable astrological sign.

**Q:** How do we explain that Joseph had a divining cup and Daniel was “master of the magicians” (Gen. 44:1-5; Dan. 4:9)?

**A:** For one thing, Joseph had the cup years before the giving of the Law, which prohibited such practices. Also, in Joseph’s case, the crystal ball, or silver cup, symbolized the Scriptures, God’s Word, where one is to look for truth. (The principle is similar with the Roman Catholic Church, which in its earliest beginning was somewhat pure, being a golden cup that was used of the Lord to dispense divine truths.) The difference is that Joseph’s cup was a type, whereas today crystal balls are used to learn about mundane situations for personal benefit.

**Comment:** Daniel 1:17-20 reads, “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” One of Satan’s methods is to take something that God permitted in a favorable sense under unusual circumstances and then copy, pervert, and use it in an inordinate extreme.

**Reply:** To use another illustration, Egyptian gods are pictured by various forms of being—a hippopotamus, a bird, or whatever. These symbols are sometimes used in the Bible to picture characteristics or doctrines, but Satan used them to represent gods. Animals in the Temple at Jerusalem pictured principles and characteristics, not personalities. Satan took the bull, whose blood was properly used by the Israelites as a sacrifice for sin, and emphasized its sexual organs instead. Thus the Adversary takes things that were used of the Lord and utilizes them more prolifically for ulterior purposes.

Incidentally, a “soothsayer” was one to whom people went for comfort. This practice still happens under occult influences, and the soothsayer, man or woman, gives favorable prognostications. It is something like getting a Chinese cookie with a fortune, which is always favorable in one form or another. Since the owners of Chinese restaurants want customers to come back for another meal, they do not give bad news. Thus soothsayers are known for giving favorable, soothing signs.

The basic thought of an “enchanter” is one who practices a form of hypnosis whereby a person is brought under a spell. Of course hypnotism is still used today.

A “witch” is usually female. Saul consulted the witch of Endor, desiring to know something about the future. The supposed appearance of Samuel, the false similitude, was produced by

occult power. Generally speaking, some type of confirmation supports the advice the witch gives. Whether the advice is good or bad, a vision usually accompanies it—a cloud or an ethereal presence. The witch momentarily becomes like a medium in producing a similitude of some kind along with the prognosis the person pays for. With “witch” being a broader term, it can also include gypsies, for instance, who use tarot cards and read palms.

**Deut. 18:11** Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

A “charmer” casts spells on people or animals. For instance, there are snake charmers. Soothing music or some form of sound is usually utilized (instead of a moving object as with a hypnotist) to produce a mood in which the subject becomes very pliable. By the words or message given, one is led of the demon who is usually behind the whole situation.

A “consulter with familiar spirits” is a medium who works with fallen angels. The demons use supernatural power to imitate the voice of someone, such as a relative, who has deceased. People pay mediums to find out if a particular dead person still exists. Mediums produce either the likeness or the voice of the deceased. Thus the term “familiar spirits” refers to individuals who are supposedly produced at the request of a former friend or relative. The witch of Endor produced such a similitude of Samuel.

A “wizard” is usually the male counterpart of a witch. He possesses supernatural powers and usually practices some form of magic. Most magicians are not wizards, but some possess supernatural powers that greatly enhance their ability to deceive. In seeing the gift of the Holy Spirit come when the apostles laid their hands on individuals, a man named Simon wanted to increase his own abilities and even offered to buy that power (Acts 8:18-20). A magician normally uses sleight of hand, whereas a wizard has supernatural power. Magicians deceive by the quickness or dexterity of their movements, perhaps waving one hand to attract attention while the other hand performs the trick. Wizards do not need such tricks, for they accomplish their goals in supernatural ways that are more convincing and dangerous.

The word “necromancer” is a combination of the two words “romancer” and “necro,” the latter meaning “black” or “dark.” Such individuals deal in black art or black magic, which involves death and/or giving instructions or lessons about the dead. A necromancer does not usually produce the deceased person in a simulated visual sense like the consulter with familiar spirits, but he talks about what is happening in the netherworld. This form of the occult was practiced quite a lot in Egypt. Stories were told about what the dead were doing. The hearers did not see anything, but the necromancers were so skilled and convincing in their storytelling about conditions beyond the state of life that some of their points seemed very reasonable. Swedenborgianism, based on the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, is a more recent example of this practice. This man personally communicated with the fallen angels and then told stories about what they had said to him. Many of the things he knew were true, but they pertained to supernatural knowledge. People who are enthralled with Swedenborgianism are usually given to science, math, and other technical subjects.

**Q:** Does a necromancer also promote hatred and injury toward others?

**A:** Yes, a necromancer can pronounce a curse on a coin, a piece of clothing, or some other object, which is wrapped attractively and sent to someone he wants to curse. When the recipient opens the package and puts the object in a room, for example, those who enter that room are under an occult situation. The object has great power for evil and can even include a death sentence.

**Comment:** Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul used this technique for good

purposes, such as healing, by blessing a napkin and sending it to someone. Satan subsequently copied this practice and has used it for evil purposes.

**Comment:** A necromancer could have put the curse on King Tut's tomb in Egypt so that whoever opened the tomb would contract an illness of a serious nature.

**Reply:** Yes, the curse that was written on the outside of the tomb had an evil power. Whoever broke the seal of the tomb was affected. The discoverer of the tomb, an Englishman, got a mysterious disease and died suddenly. Moreover, newspaper reports stated that the Egyptians who were involved with him in opening the tomb mysteriously died.

**Q:** Is necromancy a form of voodoo?

**A:** Yes. Voodoo is the pronouncing of a curse of one form or another.

**Comment:** God could have simply told the Israelites to avoid all forms of the occult, but He went into specific details to give them every opportunity to understand the prohibition, yet they disobeyed.

**Q:** Because of this listing, there were no loopholes. What are the applications today? The brethren are warned by the Pastor's writings and the Vow to avoid all forms of spiritism.

**A:** Just as we have the Ten Commandments from God, so these dangerous occult practices are the "do nots," for they can wean a person away from righteousness and truth.

**Comment:** One application is to be on guard against Satan's use of "all power and signs and lying wonders" and "all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9,10).

**Reply:** Yes. Some brethren in the Harvest period have had experiences with the occult. For example, the Ouija board has been a deception in certain cases.

**Comment:** The Apostle Paul said, "We are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). However, some of his tactics are more subtle today, for example, children's games and wicca, which is considered *white* witchcraft. These are tied to the worship of earthly things such as trees and rocks.

**Comment:** Yoga, at least the forms that pertain to communicating with one's inner self, can be a deception, and biofeedback, which seems to be a type of self-hypnosis, can be dangerous.

**Deut. 18:12** For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

**Deut. 18:13** Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

The word "perfect," in this context, means to be honest and upright. Being "imperfect," then, is a form of hypocrisy. To be "blameless" is our ideal (see Rotherham).

**Deut. 18:14** For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

**Deut. 18:15** The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Jehovah would raise up “a Prophet from the midst of thee [Israel] like unto” Moses. This Prophet would be a Jew.

**Comment:** This Prophet would be a mediator as well, for that was Moses’ role with the Law Covenant. The Apostle Peter quoted verse 15 in Acts 3:22 to show the application to Jesus.

**Reply:** Yes, the prediction was that there would be a likeness between the role of the coming Messiah, of whom the Israelites were all aware, and the role Moses occupied in dealing with the nation, although the Messiah would be on a higher plane. Without giving any details, Moses was implying that he would be unsuccessful, that he would fail in his role. He was assuring the nation that the next mediator, the Messiah, would be successful, that the people would hearken to him. The Israelites did not hearken unto Moses, for everything he commanded them not to do, they did.

In the 1940s, Bro. Sontag of Boston gave a talk on Deuteronomy 18:15, using an illustration of how Moses was “like unto” Christ. Using this key thought, we drew up a list of about 30 ways Moses was like Christ. At the First Advent, the right-hearted Jew should have realized by studying Moses’ life that Jesus was the one prophesied to come as Messiah.

**Deut. 18:16** According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

**Comment:** The Israelites’ connecting the voice of Jehovah with “this great fire” reminds us of Hebrews 12:29, “For our God is a consuming fire.” Just as we need Jesus as our Advocate under the Grace Covenant, so the people will need a Mediator in the Kingdom under the New Covenant, and the Israelites needed Moses as a mediator under the old Law Covenant.

**Deut. 18:17** And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

In reply to what the people said at Mount Horeb, “Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not,” Jehovah said to Moses, “They have well spoken that which they have spoken.” God’s voice must have been awesome for the people to make that statement. The voice of Jehovah was like a giant waterfall, extremely powerful and loud, so that it penetrated their eardrums. The fire was equally awesome in its brilliance, being the result of an earthquake. The people were awed by both sight and sound.

**Deut. 18:18** I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Verse 18 is more or less a repeat of verse 15. The Prophet, the Messiah to come, would speak unto Israel “all that I [God] shall command him.” The repetition indicates the importance of this prophecy.

**Comment:** Jesus fulfilled verse 18 by saying repeatedly, “I can do nothing of myself. I speak the words that the Father has given me” (compare John 8:28; 12:49,50).

**Reply:** Yes, he usually either looked up to heaven when he prayed or uttered similar words.

**Comment:** Verse 18 certainly refutes the Trinity. God would put His words in the mouth of Jesus, the Prophet like unto Moses.

**Deut. 18:19** And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my [God’s] words which he [that Prophet, Jesus] shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

**Comment:** Even though verse 19 does not spell out the penalty definitively, the correlating Scripture, Acts 3:23, reads, “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet [in the Kingdom Age], shall be [utterly] destroyed from among the people.” Thus Moses’ statement “I will require it of him” referred to the life of the individual, namely, a destiny of Second Death.

**Comment:** The Heavenly Father said He would speak to Moses “mouth to mouth” (Num. 12:8).

**Reply:** Since no man can see God and live, He appeared right in front of Moses in similitude, using some kind of representative image (Exod. 33:20; John 1:18). No other prophet, no matter who he was—Daniel, Noah, or whoever—had that particular experience except Jesus Christ at the First Advent. That was one of the unique ways the ministry of Moses differed from the ministries of the other prophets. Another example was his role as the mediator of a covenant. The other prophets spoke with a “thus saith the LORD,” and were perhaps given visions or dreams, but they did not have these unique experiences of Moses.

**Deut. 18:20** But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

**Comment:** The Book of Jeremiah tells about Hananiah, a false prophet who presumed to speak in the name of Jehovah. Hananiah prophesied that the yoke would be broken off King Nebuchadnezzar and peace would come to Israel within two years.

“Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck, and brake it.

“And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years....

“Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

“So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.”  
(Jer. 28:10,11,15-17)

**Reply:** Jeremiah took iron yokes, instead of wooden yokes, and sent them by emissaries to Ammon, Moab, Edom, etc., warning about the coming judgment, which would make desolate these nations just like Israel (Jer. 28:12-14).

**Comment:** Jeremiah 14:14,15 states the principle: “Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake



unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.”

**Comment:** Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). Teaching principles contrary to the Word of God brings culpability.

**Reply:** The Apostle James stated, “My brethren, be not many masters [teachers, elders], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). The office of elder brings more responsibility. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop [elder], he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). *If*, by God’s providence, a brother matures and develops sufficiently, then desiring the office of an elder is a laudable desire. However, to step out presumptuously and make dogmatic statements that are not a “thus saith the LORD” incurs tremendous responsibility. For example, both Jeremiah and the false prophet were saying, “Thus saith the LORD,” yet their messages were contradictory.

**Deut. 18:21** And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

“How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?” is a reasonable question. People are prone to believe anyone who affirms with strength of voice that he received a message from God. Verse 22 deserves considerable attention with regard to answering this question. Incidentally, some in nominal circles are testifying that they have had interviews with God or Jesus, and they relate the supposed conversation.

**Deut. 18:22** When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

In our judgment, this verse has been improperly translated by almost all scholars except the very Orthodox Jew. A couple of Orthodox Jews have spoken on this verse and, in our opinion, have given the proper interpretation. We think Protestant and Catholic scholarship has been misleading.

As the verse reads, it could be said, “Pastor Russell predicted that in 1914, the Church would be complete and glorified, and the Times of the Gentiles would end. Since these events did not happen, he has spoken presumptuously.” Others such as Miller and Luther also predicted dates that did not come to pass. With regard to myself, I never stated dates positively but put question marks, even though some of them are not seen now. The point is that almost all honest Bible students who are hungering and thirsting to know about the future have, to some extent, thought certain events were evidences of the coming of Christ, and they spoke quite strongly, feeling that the Lord’s Word taught these things. Even holy angels and holy prophets such as Daniel inquired diligently, but there were statements and expectations that did not occur. As rendered here, verse 22 would be condemnatory, so it needs sober examination.

After much hard thinking on this subject, we came to a determination and application of what we felt verse 22 was saying. Lo and behold, we found that the Orthodox Jew gave the proper thought, as we had concluded. Not only is the verb “follow” in the wrong tense, but Moses was speaking about a different situation than is implied by the King James translation. Verse 22 is based upon the practices of sorcerers, necromancers, charmers, etc., who are asked to cast a

spell or pronounce a curse on somebody. If in a particular instance, a sorcerer or one who is given to that type of profession or work is involved, then we know that what is spoken will not happen. The antitype of this picture is Papacy, which has used this type of authority to excommunicate or put a curse on individuals. Not only did papal excommunication bar one from employment, but many family members usually forsook the excommunicated person because of fear.

In other words, if someone pronounced a curse on us, but we knew we were a person of God—that we had made a consecration to do His will—the thing pronounced would not happen. Therefore, we changed the words “if the thing follow not” to “if [we know] the thing will not follow.” If a false prophet or teacher predicts something of an injurious nature to one of God’s children, and we know he is false, the injurious proclamation will not happen. No harm will come upon the Lord’s little one.

On the one hand, the verbs in Hebrew are flexible, so we have to get the gist of the context in order to understand the proper tense. On the other hand, the Greek language is more specific because it has the aorist tense, although it can be understood. The English language, which has a vocabulary of at least 40,000 words, is far more specific with tenses than Spanish, French, Greek, and Hebrew. While the Greek is quite specific, the English is more definitive. The point is that if verse 22 were rendered as incorrectly stated in English, it would kill the study of prophecy because of the consequences of misinterpretation. Teachers would avoid the subject of prophecy and the need to be awake.

The correct thought is, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD of a thing that will not come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” In other words, *if we know that the thing will not come to pass*, the prophet has spoken presumptuously. The admonition is addressed to God’s people with regard to listening to others who take the role of speaking presumptuously. A wrong attitude is for the one speaking to not merely prophesy but to prophesy with strong affirmation. It is proper to *suggest* an interpretation—a modifying factor has to be involved—but not to be bold and dogmatic.

In the case here in verse 22, we know the matter will not come to pass, for it is false. Therefore, when true Christians were excommunicated and condemned by the Catholic priesthood, they knew that they had a relationship with Jesus and that they were wrongly excommunicated, even though others did not know of their bona fide relationship and were frightened to have dealings with them. The Roman Catholic Church used excommunication as a very effective weapon for more than a thousand years.

So in this case, the false prophet is predicting a wrong thing to come that is misleading God’s people. Even the Tanach states, “If the prophet will speak in the Name of Hashem [Jehovah], and that thing will not occur and not come about—that is the word that Hashem has not spoken; with willfulness has the prophet spoken it, you should not fear him.”

**Q:** In verse 21, the question is asked, “How do we know an individual is a false prophet?” Therefore, how can verse 22, the answer, be that we already know he is a false prophet?

**A:** We know one is a false prophet if he speaks presumptuously. It is his attitude. He speaks with power, instilling fear in his audience. For example, when a person asks a sorcerer to pronounce a curse on someone else, that curse is effectual in many instances but not on the consecrated. Sorcerers, necromancers, etc., make some remarkable predictions because the fallen angels use these human agents or mediums.

**Comment:** Voodoo is strong in certain cultures, and there are many documented accounts of a hex being put on someone and death occurring within a very short time period.

**Reply:** Yes, sorcerers, necromancers, etc., are effectual. When, as the Lord's people, we see that they are trying to injure us, we should first ask, "Am I doing wrong? Have I committed the unpardonable sin? Do I merit the type of curse they are pronouncing?" If we know in our heart that in spite of all our failings, we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and are trying to please Him, we should not fear the curse, for it will not come to pass. The Lord's people should search their heart to see whether they merit a particular experience.

**Comment:** On a television program, some were trying to scientifically ascertain why voodoo seems to work in so many cultures. The conclusion was that the results were psychosomatic. They could not come to grips with the fact that there is a real mystical aspect and that it actually works. Their point was that people are so fearful of a hex that it becomes like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Pastor attributed half of the inmates in an insane asylum to being possessed, but today that assessment would make one a laughingstock in medical circles.

**Reply:** Yes, we believe there is a great deal of truth in the Pastor's statement.

The Roman Catholic Church used excommunication as a punishment, and there were degrees of excommunication and even monetary penalties of different values. The threat of utter isolation was used as a means of power in controlling people's lives.

**Deut. 19:1** When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses;

**Deut. 19:2** Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

**Deut. 19:3** Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither.

Some time would pass before three cities of refuge could be established where a presumably innocent manslayer could flee for refuge from especially the brother of the victim or another relative who, under hasty emotion, might slay an innocent man. God made this arrangement so that when an accidental death occurred, the Israelite could immediately flee to one of the cities of refuge as fast as possible and dwell there until the matter was settled.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 4:41-43 identifies by name the three cities of refuge that were east of the Jordan River.

**Reply:** Yes, in all, three cities were west of the Jordan River in Israel proper, and three cities were on the east side of the river. Here in verse 2, Moses was referring to the three cities in Israel proper. The cities of refuge were so positioned that on both sides of the Jordan, one city was in the far north of the land, one was in the far south, and one was in the middle. Therefore, as far as reasonably possible, wherever a slaying took place in the land, the one who was fleeing could get to a Levitical city of refuge. In other words, it was purposely geographically determined where the cities were located so that the distance would not be so great that the pursuer could overtake the manslayer.

**Comment:** The Revised Standard reads, "You shall prepare the roads," indicating that the way for the manslayer to flee was to be made easy.

**Reply:** The Law of Moses is profound and complex, yet sufficient examples are given so that it can be interpreted more explicitly. The Law was originally given in as few words as possible, but even so, the Torah is quite lengthy.

**Comment:** Some feel that the Law of Moses is hard and unmerciful, whereas the Christian dispensation is one of mercy, but the cities of refuge are a good example of how the Law was merciful in providing a safe haven until the matter could be resolved.

**Reply:** The Law more or less says that one should do unto his neighbor as he would have the neighbor do unto him. Thus it is fairly close to the gospel message, which is on a higher plane. Certainly the Law is not as cruel and severe as many think. For example, when God told Adam that he could eat freely of all the trees in the Garden of Eden except one, the command was very simple, yet many think He was unmerciful to put the death sentence on Adam for eating the fruit of a particular tree. Sometimes people fail to see the mercy aspect in the Law because they are prejudiced even before they read it.

**Deut. 19:4** And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past;

Great care has been taken to make a distinction between two kinds of slaying: unintentional (or accidental) and premeditated. This factor should be considered in rendering judgment.

**Comment:** It is hard to understand the whole issue of family members of the deceased pursuing one who has killed another, whether unintentional or premeditated.

**Reply:** The arrangement took care of such cases. Many who were truly guilty fled to a city of refuge, but the arrangement made sure that the one who *remained* in the city had *accidentally* killed his neighbor.

**Deut. 19:5** As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:

The example given of accidental death is “when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth [swings] a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve [shaft], and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die.” That person, the slayer, would flee unto a city of refuge and live.

**Deut. 19:6** Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

Lest the avenger in hot pursuit overtake the slayer and kill him because the way was long, cities of refuge were provided. One reason for hot pursuit would be that people often garble a message or do not provide enough information to show the slaying was accidental and not premeditated. If the avenger was hot-headed by nature and would not listen to reason, the slayer would need a head start to get to the city of refuge. A lot of wrong or prejudiced information is given, even among ourselves. Then judgment is given on partial or one-sided information. The lesson for us is to be careful in discussing untoward things that happen in our midst lest we lose our levelheadedness. We should try to obtain the spirit of a sound mind in making judgments and deciding on a course of action.

**Comment:** Many Christians do not understand that the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” really means “Thou shalt not murder.”

**Reply:** Killing in warfare is considered a little different from what the Ten Commandments are referring to.

**Deut. 19:7** Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.

Let us return to Numbers chapter 35.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan;

“Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares.

“And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

“And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge.

“Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge.

“These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.” (Num. 35:9-15)

Two additional details become apparent. (1) There were six cities of refuge in all. (2) The requirements applied not only to the Israelites but also to the “stranger” and the “sojourner.”

“And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

“And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

“Or if he smite him with an handweapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

“The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him.

“But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die;

“Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.

“But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait,

“Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm:

“Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments.” (Num. 35:16-24)

Several other cases were now given, both pro and con, where responsibility was incurred either by the slayer or by the one in pursuit.

**Comment:** Premeditation was the worst offense, but intent was also a factor. Even if on the spur of the moment, a person intended to do harm, the slaying was considered murder. Only if the case was truly accidental and without intent was an allowance made.

**Reply:** In other words, here is a case that contradicts some of the current laws. In a trial for murder or manslaughter today, the judge usually considers the past of the defendant and the victim irrelevant. But the Law of Moses required an inquiry into past feelings as having a bearing on the case; that is, was there a grudge? Even a premeditated death could be made to look accidental, but harbored ill feelings would reveal the truth of the situation.

**Comment:** Recently some boys threw a turkey from an overpass that smashed through the windshield of a car, injuring a woman. Under the Law, if she had died, the boys would have been considered murderers because of the intent to do harm.

**Comment:** In Hebrew, the words “avenger” and “revenger” are the same as “Redeemer” in Isaiah 59:20, “The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.”

**Reply:** Yes. Another example is that the same Hebrew consonants are used for a holy offering and a curse. The nuances of pronunciation make the difference.

**Comment:** Under the Law, what was in the heart of the individual was significant. A lesson for us is that God considers the heart attitude very important in our actions. We must make sure our hearts are pure toward our brethren. If there is any animosity, we are responsible.

**Reply:** To be judges in the Kingdom Age, we need a proper exercise of thought along these lines in the current life, for we will not obtain an office for which we have not given any consideration. Unfortunately, we often form judgments with only one side of the equation. For various reasons, we do not sufficiently take both sides into consideration. For instance, a family relationship may pervert judgmental thinking. Also, getting too emotionally involved makes it difficult to render proper judgment. Still another problem could be a hearing impairment that prevents understanding a matter clearly. As Christians, we have to develop a habit of thought on both sides of an issue so that we will see what might be favorable to the other party. Not forgiving from the heart is also detrimental to rendering proper judgment. When a person says, “I am sorry,” we are obligated to accept the apology and not question the degree of sincerity. The individual has gone through the motions of an apology, so we must forgive from the heart—even if trespassed against seven times in a day with the trespasser saying he is sorry each time. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke obligate us to accept the apology because we cannot read the heart. The matter would be completely different if we could read the heart, for we would know if the party was truly sorry. Of course this principle applies to little digs and nuances, not to grievous sin. These trespasses are not that serious—they are things that happen in life—but when it comes to a sin like adultery, the equation is different.

**Comment:** 1 John 3:15 reads, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

**Reply:** That Scripture is true, but God determines what is in the heart.

“And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.

“But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled;

“And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:

“Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession.” (Num. 35:25-28)

When the slayer fled to a city of refuge, those in the city wanted to know whether the case was legitimate. To have the matter clarified one way or the other, the congregation went back to the place where the incident had occurred. Today the courts try to have an impartial judgment of a murder, so the defense may request a change of venue to move the trial as far away as possible from where the incident took place. God’s Law required the opposite—the judgment was to take place where the incident occurred.

In other words, some from the city of refuge safely escorted the individual back to the location of the incident. If they were satisfied he was legitimate, they brought him back to the city of refuge, where he remained until the death of the high priest. If he was guilty, he was left in the locale where the slaying had occurred, and the local people took care of the punishment. The arrangement was fair and just.

What is the signification of the phrase “unto the death of the high priest”?

**Comment:** After the death of the high priest, the avenger was no longer at liberty to seek revenge. At that point, for the avenger to kill the individual would constitute murder.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the implication.

**Comment:** In regard to the Christian, some were murderers, thieves, etc., prior to consecration. From the time of their consecration, their past is forgiven, and they come under the merit of Christ’s sacrifice. In regard to the world, with the death of the Church, mankind will be released from the bondage of sin and its consequences.

**Reply:** For the Church in the Gospel Age, the high priest is Jesus only. For the world in the Kingdom Age, the antitypical high priest is The Christ, Head and body members. Where the death of the high priest applies to Jesus personally, those Jews who believe into Christ are free from the obligations of the Law. For them, the Law is nailed to the Cross because they have died to that situation and entered into Christ.

**Comment:** Even though one who willfully murders, for example, can subsequently repent and become a Christian, there will be retribution experiences, and the Lord may still permit

penalties to be exacted under the civil law.

**Reply:** Yes. The Apostle Paul is an example along that line. Although he did not actually throw the stones, he imprisoned Christians and was responsible for the deaths of some of the believers. In regard to fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, Paul said, “Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

“So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

“Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

“Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

“And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.

“So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

“Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.” (Num. 35:29-34)

**Comment:** More than one witness was required for the death penalty to be enacted.

**Deut. 19:8** And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers;

**Deut. 19:9** If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

**Deut. 19:10** That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.

The word “if” in verses 8 and 9 indicates that God’s promise was conditional upon obedience. The first three cities of refuge were east of the Jordan River (verse 7). If the Israelites would “keep all these commandments to do them,” then three cities of refuge would be added on the west side of the Jordan River.

**Deut. 19:11** But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities:

**Deut. 19:12** Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

**Deut. 19:13** Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.



In this case, where the killing was premeditated murder, the elders of the home city of the murderer brought him back to face “the avenger of blood, that he [the murderer] may die.” In other words, those of the city of the one who did this dastardly deed sent to the Levites of the city of refuge where the murderer had fled, presented the situation, and demanded that the murderer be committed into their hands to go back home for a fair trial. Thus the guilty one could no longer remain in the city of refuge.

The Law, which teaches capital punishment, is God’s institution and thus is superior to man’s law. During the Gospel Age, the Christian is under mercy, but that mercy is an exception to the general (and superior) rule of the Law. However, if a Christian commits a serious crime, we are to assent to the judgment against the criminal act, but we are not the executioners. Nor are we advocates that a Christian must obey the Law in order to be justified. We are of a different calling; we are living in a different atmosphere. As Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). While here on earth, we are like friendly aliens in a foreign country.

**Comment:** The spurious words attributed to Jesus in John 8:7, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” have hindered the Western world in their concept of God’s Law. It takes away from the weight of the Law in the Old Testament and God’s thinking.

**Q:** Should a Christian have anything to do with enforcing the death penalty? Wouldn’t we look at the matter the same way we view going to war? Sometimes a cause is just, but we do not get involved. We appreciate seeing justice being done by the courts, but we stay apart from the system.

**A:** Yes. The Christian does not have to be concerned with such matters at the present time because existing institutions, such as courts and prisons, are in place.

**Q:** If we had to sit on a jury for a murder case that was obviously premeditated, shouldn’t we agree to the death penalty?

**A:** One way to avoid that situation is to mention up front that we believe in capital punishment. Another way out is if we are above a certain age. However, if we were mandated into the situation and could not get excused and had expressed ourself beforehand, then it would be advisable to assent to the majority rule of the jury if the verdict were in harmony with the proper judgment.

**Q:** Some brethren have no qualms about sitting on a jury, and other brethren have concerns. The Pastor felt participation was permissible for the Christian. What are some thoughts?

**A:** Sitting on a jury can produce anxiety because of not getting enough information. Sometimes the prosecution withholds certain information or presents flawed information, and the defense attorney may overlook or be unaware of important facts that would free his client. If we could read the minds and motives of individuals, as the Little Flock will do, that would be a different situation, and we could render a fairly good judgment. Even Jesus himself in the Kingdom Age will present a problem in judgment to the Father. It is said of Jesus, “He shall not judge after [according to] the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears” (Isa. 11:3). In other words, there are cases where one could actually see an act being committed and still make a wrong judgment. Some courts want to see a “smoking gun,” but even a smoking gun is not necessarily a true indicator.

**Comment:** Serving on a jury would be an uncomfortable situation for the Christian for two reasons. (1) We would probably not get all of the facts. (2) The laws decide which facts are

relevant and which facts are not, whereas the Scriptures consider a person's past to be pertinent to a case. When I was chosen to sit on a grand jury and the question was asked, "Is there any reason why someone should not be on the jury?" I raised my hand and said, "Any decisions that I make will be based on scriptural principles and not necessarily on the laws of the land." The question was next asked, "Under what circumstances would the Scriptures supersede the law of the land?" The grand jury was not such an issue, for there the jurors just decide if there is enough evidence to bring a case to trial. However, an actual trial could be very different because the jury might be told to discount evidence that we, as Christians, would feel is pertinent to the case. For example, if irrefutable evidence was obtained without a search warrant, it would be thrown out, but we would consider it relevant.

**Reply:** We were just making a general comment to assent to the majority opinion of the jury, but of course if something unusual like discounted relevant evidence came up, we would want to voice our difference.

**Comment:** Where verse 11 states, "If any man hate his neighbour and lie in wait for him," we are told right at the beginning that the murder was premeditated. Otherwise, we would have to wait and hear the witnesses before we could judge if the act was premeditated.

**Reply:** We are called to be judges, and in the present life, circumstances come up from time to time that should sharpen our judgment to discern the difference between good and evil. We call the ability to judge in that fashion "maturity." Christian maturity enables one to more fairly discern right and wrong. We are in a school now to determine right and wrong in doctrine, morals, character, and principles, and of course the Lord is examining every one of us to see how we are developing and whether we are fit to be priests and kings in the next age. If not, we are then judged to see if we are even worthy of life.

With His infallible judgment, God will square accounts in due time. For instance, because Paul was responsible for the death of some of Jesus' disciples, he had to be providentially stoned to death more than once to expiate the sins so that he could receive a crown. Sometimes the retribution for sin is educational for the individual. In other words, while the experience is painful, it can be a stepping-stone. Thus, generally speaking, there is an economy in the way the Lord deals with us in our short lifetime.

**Deut. 19:14** Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

The stones that marked property lines were sometimes a hundred yards apart. "Landmark" stones could be in little piles or larger piles. If a dishonest neighbor moved the stones little by little, how would the property owner know his land was being diminished? The landowner could easily be defrauded, but God would know what was being done. As time went on, stakes were driven into the ground; then iron stakes were cemented into the ground. Next barbed wire was used and finally electrified barbed wire, so as time went on, different expedencies were invented to prohibit dishonesty.

**Comment:** Hosea 5:10 reads, "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound[ary]: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water." When the ten tribes went into captivity, the two tribes remaining in the land appropriated land from the ten tribes. The Lord was angry about this violation of the Law.

**Reply:** Sometimes they also took goodies that were left behind by the original plunderers.

**Deut. 19:15** One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

The obvious point is that the facts are to be established without any additions or subtractions. Just the bare facts are to be presented. The problem with only one witness could be prejudice or malice. By implication, the party who is supposedly guilty has said, "I am innocent." Today, even when pictures show someone doing the deed, so that the evidence is to the contrary, the individual still says he is innocent, but at least with one witness, the individual has the liberty to either admit his guilt or declare his innocence. Thus the principle of not being judged by one witness is certainly fair.

**Comment:** At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall a matter be established. A person is responsible not only for himself but also for others. When a witness is produced, he is liable for the words that he speaks.

**Reply:** Generally speaking, perhaps 90 percent of the time, two witnesses certify the truthfulness of a situation, but there are conditions where both witnesses are prejudiced. In fact, their prejudice can be so strong that they will risk even their own life and reputation. In cases where there are five witnesses, three should settle the matter. These cases would be extraordinary, for as the witnesses increase, if they realize they will suffer the same penalty for being a false witness, the difference between having two or three witnesses is a quantum leap. Three witnesses are obtained for several reasons, one being that the number is generally more reliable for making a proper judgment.

Sometimes the Lord uses three (or more) witnesses to get a point through our dull heads. The repetition is for our good, for He wants to impress upon us the importance of the statement being made. He is concerned for us as individuals.

**Q:** Could one or more of these "witnesses" be nonliving, such as a photograph of the crime being committed or fingerprints? From the standpoint of a false witness, one would be penalized for doctoring a photo or for forging a document.

**A:** Yes. Back there scales were sometimes falsified with lighter or heavier weights according to the intention of the dishonest person.

The purpose is to have a fair trial and a just sentence. If a person has committed a crime, he should be punished in proportion to his deed. The Golden Rule is wonderful in its simplicity: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Of course the Christian goes one step higher.

**Deut. 19:16** If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong;

**Deut. 19:17** Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

A false witness stood "before the LORD" in the sense that he stood before the priests and the judges. Thus there was a distinction between a priest, representing an ecclesiastical decision or court and God's Word, and a judge, a civil magistrate. The balance resulted in a fair trial. In the case of a misjudgment, God will make sure it is taken care of in the future. Ultimately, matters will be straightened out, thank God!

**Deut. 19:18** And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;

**Deut. 19:19** Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

**Comment:** While perjury is viewed as a serious offense in our current judicial system, the penalty that is exacted is not equal to the punishment of the crime being judged. If it were, the potential punishment would be a good deterrent for bearing false witness. For example, the one giving a false witness about a murder would be put to death.

**Reply:** During Moses' lifetime, matters were handled scripturally. Then, as judges came along, the stringency of God's Law and commands was gradually softened, and punishments were lessened. In time, Israel's judges and priests went way out of balance on the side of leniency.

**Deut. 19:20** And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

**Deut. 19:21** And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc., is fair. If a person deliberately cuts off the hand of another, his own hand is cut off.

**Comment:** Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38,39).

**Reply:** A Christian does not exact punishment upon his persecutor. If any guilt is involved, God will take care of the matter sooner or later. Meanwhile, we are to suffer the wrong. If our eye is put out, that experience may be permitted for something willful we did wrong, even before consecration. At the time, we would probably focus on the loss of our eye, but the trial could be retribution. For example, a murderer can be admitted to Christian fellowship, but that does not mean he is free and clear, for God will take care of any retribution. However, neither we nor others can be judgmental in that situation, for we do not know all of the facts. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (1 Tim. 5:24). Since we may draw the wrong lesson from certain providences that occur in our life, we should just suffer the experience. For example, someone may steal our coat. The principle is to be forgiving and not to demand justice at this time.

**Comment:** Three Scriptures apply. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). We do not know to what extent Satan is instigating the wrongs. Therefore, we should have pity on those who persecute us.

**Comment:** As an example of retribution, Samson's eyes were put out at the end of his life because his eyes were his weakness in his relationships with women.

**Deut. 20:1** When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

In considering verses 1-4, we will discuss Scriptures and spiritual lessons for the Christian.

**Comment:** When the enemies of God seem overwhelming, we should go forward in *His* confidence.

**Comment:** “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5,6).

**Comment:** “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

**Reply:** When Martin Luther was summoned to the council, he went alone.

**Comment:** A picture of the feet members at the end of the age, the three Hebrew children said, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:17,18). Refusing to bow down to the image on the plain of Dura, they left their lives in God’s hands.

**Comment:** The instruction of verse 1 has applied in principle ever since God began to deal with mankind. Therefore, even in the Kingdom, the people will have to trust and obey and not be fearful.

**Reply:** Yes, this instruction is appropriate in all ages.

**Comment:** The principle applies in our daily lives with enemies against us and problems and trials. We are not to be afraid but are to reflect on past leadings of the Lord. Just as the Israelites were to remember how God led them out of Egypt, so we are to keep past providences and deliverances in mind. Then we will have courage to press on in our daily walk.

**Reply:** Yes, we were miraculously called in the first place.

**Comment:** Jesus answered Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee [permitted] from above” (John 19:11).

**Comment:** We may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

**Deut. 20:2** And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,

Since Jesus is “the priest” for the Christian, we should consult him for instruction in time of “battle.” In the literal account, the high priest gave counsel unto the people regarding what the Lord’s will was. Then the judge or king—whoever was in civil authority—gave further instruction in harmony with the sacred decision.

**Deut. 20:3** And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;

**Comment:** We must have confidence in the Lord in order to go forward.

**Comment:** We are not to worry ahead of time, for the Lord will give us the words to say.

**Reply:** “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34).

**Q:** The King James margin has “tender” for the word “faint.” Is that a different connotation?

**A:** No, “tender” is an Old English way of saying the same thing. The same Hebrew word also means “fainthearted.”

**Comment:** The context is about going into a literal physical battle. The person might fear his own death or the killing of others. The Christian is to lose his life for the Lord’s sake (Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33).

**Reply:** Yes, spiritual lessons are drawn from the natural. We do not fight with carnal weapons.

**Deut. 20:4** For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

**Comment:** We are reminded of the destroying angel’s going out against Sennacherib and slaying 185,000 of the enemy in answer to King Hezekiah’s prayer (Isa. 37:15-20,33-36).

**Reply:** Yes, that is a good example because the Israelites were very fearful until Isaiah gave the advice and Hezekiah faithfully followed it.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25). For the Christian, verse 4 refers to the saving of the new creature, however the Lord chooses to work out the experience.

**Reply:** Yes, that advice would be especially true at the end of the age.

**Comment:** David had great confidence in God when he fought the giant Goliath.

**Reply:** Yes, David’s slaying of Goliath and other deeds are a good example, for later one of his followers at the time of Saul’s pursuit killed Goliath’s brother, who was also a giant. Thus the example of others can be contagious in a good sense, giving courage to perform similar deeds.

**Deut. 20:5** And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

**Deut. 20:6** And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

**Deut. 20:7** And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

Verses 5-7 give three examples of those who would be excused from warfare. Moses was not saying that the Israelites would lose the battle, for casualties occur in any real warfare. Rather, it would be sad indeed if these individuals did not get some reward for the fruit of their labor.

**Q:** Since these verses pertained to humanitarian considerations for Israelites going out to battle, how would we spiritualize them?

**A:** In the antitype, prayer is necessary, but if a spiritual confrontation cannot be avoided, the Christian has to accept it. Knowing his weakness, he should prepare as best he can, praying and even fasting to get closer to the Lord and to obtain additional strength. If one did not take these steps but just stood there and trembled and allowed the situation to overtake him, he would not be given strength. In regard to decisions that have to be made in the Christian walk, it is essential to keep the anchor of faith fastened within the Most Holy.

**Comment:** The Lord has promised not to test us beyond what we can bear but will provide a way of escape. This principle is particularly true with new Christians, who are given a sufficiency of time—perhaps only a year as in the case of Stephen—before an extreme trial or confrontation arises that might even result in their demise.

**Comment:** Men were properly exempted from warfare if they were newly married but had not had time to consummate the marriage. Since the exemption was permitted, it was not a trumped-up excuse for getting out of battle. In the antitype, therefore, some kind of allowance is made for the new Christian.

**Reply:** Yes, the Lord's providence allows a year's grace, as it were, for newcomers to have a sunshine period of joy. However, just before and just after consecration, the Adversary tries to interfere with critical decision making. Even Jesus was tempted severely by Satan when, immediately after his baptism in the Jordan, he fled to the wilderness for 40 days. Nevertheless, he received strengthening as a new creature.

**Comment:** From another standpoint, one who goes into battle must be totally focused on the warfare. Concentration is essential. If his mind is concerned about his wife, house, or vineyard, it will not be 100 percent on the battle, and thus he will be a hindrance to everyone around him.

**Reply:** Certainly one's behavior is influential in either encouraging or discouraging others who are about to go into battle.

In regard to these three illustrations—house, vineyard, and wife—the Lord seems to allow a grace period early in a Christian's experience. He makes special *temporary* considerations that are no longer expedient later on. After the grace period, the Christian is to accept whatever the Lord's providence permits. Since God does not try us beyond what we are able, these three illustrations are some of the ways of escape.

God made certain allowances not only with humans (both natural and as new creatures) but also with animals. For example, a kid was not to be seethed in his mother's milk (Exod. 23:19). That principle seems to operate in God's character, for He takes such factors into consideration.

**Deut. 20:8** **And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.**

**Comment:** In the battle between Gideon and the Midianites, parameters were set to prevent some of the Israelites from participating. In the final analysis, only 300 went to battle, picturing the Little Flock. In this case, the officers said to the Israelites, "If you are fearful, do not go to battle." Sometimes the consecrated put mortgages on themselves that could prevent them from being in the battle to the greatest extent.

**Reply:** In verse 8, some of the Israelites were given a legitimate excuse, but the 9,700, who did not fight with Gideon, did not participate in the reward in the sense that the 300 did. The 9,700

fought later, after the main battle was over, but they complained. They did not realize their own shortcomings, but the Lord did and knew how to weed them out.

Here the officers spoke further unto the people, saying in effect, “If any man is fearful, let him return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint as well.” A person’s fear is contagious, and in battle, that is the last effect that is wanted.

**Comment:** It is interesting that the officers did the weeding out.

**Reply:** Yes, and the officers can be spiritualized. Generally speaking, Christians who are more mature, whether male or female, elders or otherwise—that is, the battle-hardened who have had experience—are better able to give advice because they have had the same trials.

**Comment:** The issue of being fainthearted was one of the tests on the men with Gideon. The Great Company has a fear of sacrifice and death.

**Reply:** The number of men with Gideon was weeded out twice. The 32,000 were reduced to 10,000, and the 10,000 were whittled down to 300. The 9,700 represent the Great Company, who lack the confidence of the 300. Because the Lord knew their weakness, He used the water test to eliminate them. The Scriptures show that many of the Great Company class are confident with their words, but when the situation comes down to the serious decisions of life, they are found wanting in one way or another. The lesson is that it is better to be slow to speak and swift to hear in some of these situations.

**Q:** In the Gideon type, do the 22,000 picture tares and the 9,700 the Great Company?

**A:** Yes. The 9,700 participated later, and so did the 300 from another standpoint. The breaking of the vessels by the 300 ended one scenario. Their later participation takes place in a separate scenario in antitype.

**Deut. 20:9** And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

After speaking to the people, the officers appointed captains to lead them. When certain providences are looming on the scene, showing that the end of the age is immediately before us, it will be logical to think of the camaraderie of the body of Christ and to want to know what we should do as a class of the Lord’s people. Individual experiences, when someone breaks in our front door, for example, are another matter. For the authorities to seize a family member and take him into custody will be a wrenching experience to both the individual and those left behind. None are to be fearful. However, we think an allowance for fear will be made in the *suddenness* of the immediate experience. (For instance, to hear an explosion would cause a natural reaction.) For those who are rightly exercised, strength will set in, coming as the situation stabilizes a little and as we soberly think and pray and let our heart rest in the Lord. We must look to Him for sustaining grace. First, though, we will react to the immediacy of the situation, for natural reflexes are built into our body system. Therefore, *if as individuals*, we are asleep in bed and the authorities suddenly burst open the front door, the initial natural reaction will be fear, but when we come to our senses moments later, we will begin to stabilize. *As a class*, we will look for advice among the brotherhood when we see something looming up that requires a decision. For instance, we believe that authorities will go from house to house at that time to ascertain where people stand on certain matters. Our response must be to say, “Not a confederacy.” We are not to fear the world’s fear but to fear God (Isa. 8:12). Such decisions will be made with some preparation—they will not be that sudden compared with the individual experiences mentioned previously. The point is that there is a communal responsibility in the



brotherhood as well as an individual responsibility.

**Deut. 20:10** When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

**Deut. 20:11** And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

**Deut. 20:12** And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it:

Verses 10-12 call to mind Jesus' words to the apostles in Matthew 10:12-14. "And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." When witnessing, which is something like a battle, the Israelites were to say "Peace" to a house. The practice of going from door to door was followed for many centuries down through the Gospel Age, whereas today laws prohibit that method. We are living in a little different time slot now with radical changes because of the advance of technology.

In the past, if a Christian was approaching a house, he mentally prayed while coming to the gate of the yard and thus before reaching the door to the house. He asked the Lord's guidance with regard to the individual living in that particular dwelling. If he was welcomed and the reception was peace, the Christian knew how to behave. He took advantage of the situation as a door of opportunity and stayed for perhaps an hour. If the individual was not interested, the Christian moved on.

**Comment:** The thought of the authorities going from door to door in the future will be Satan's attempt to stop the promulgation of the truth. When our peace does not come back to us, we will have to "make war," as it were, against the enemies of the truth.

**Q:** The Israelites did not make peace except with the men of Gibeon, who deceived them (Joshua 9). In conquering the land, the Israelites were to destroy their enemies. Therefore, why did the Lord include this provision in the Law to make peace?

**A:** The Israelites were to deal differently with the Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites (Josh. 3:10). With the others, they were to follow Moses' instruction here and allow those who submitted to be tributaries. Stated another way, there was a difference between named (specified) and unnamed enemies. Thus a distinction was made between the different classes within the land of Canaan—the seven peoples and the others. Similarly in the spiritual picture, when we go among the public, we find that some are dogmatic sectarians. With these, we figuratively wipe the dust off our feet and leave; that is, we do not battle out the matter when we see they are hardened in a sectarian mold.

**Q:** How does the Christian "make war" against opposers? It does not sound as if he just withdraws, figuratively shaking the dust off his feet?

**A:** In reading the Law and drawing lessons as new creatures, we cannot always find an exact parallelism, for there are incongruities, such as this one, that do not apply. However, general lessons and principles can be extracted. Pictures like Gideon are very specific types, whereas others give general attitudes. Just as natural Israel was to follow general rules, for which there were exceptions, so we, as Christians, extrapolate general lessons. Where inconsistencies occur,

we do not try to harmonize them.

**Comment:** In the spiritual picture of shaking the dust off our feet, we have to overcome tendencies of our flesh. In cases where the flesh acquiesces to the new creature, we do not have to fight, for the flesh is our servant. However, when our fleshly tendencies fight against the spiritual, we have to wage a battle to overcome them.

**Reply:** An example of wiping the dust off our feet is the following. If we go to a house and get an unfavorable response, the tendency of the flesh is to become discouraged. But if we wipe off our feet and do not let the rebuff influence the rest of our day, we will go to the next house with optimism. The point is to wipe the dust off our feet in regard to a *particular unfavorable* experience. There is warfare between the old man and the new creature.

**Comment:** The new creature should not allow deception from the old man.

**Reply:** We are not always 100 percent victorious in all of our experiences by any means, but some of them can be stepping-stones to higher levels of development.

**Deut. 20:13** And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

**Deut. 20:14** But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

**Deut. 20:15** Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

A distinction was made between peoples, for some were “very far off,” that is, in the suburbs on the east side of the Jordan River. Subsequently in history, as the Israelites developed as a people, land from tributary peoples outside of the heartland was annexed to Israel, but that was a different circumstance. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, six enemy peoples were on the west side of the Jordan River: Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites. (The seventh people, the Girgashites, who were east of Jordan, were conquered earlier.) These six enemy peoples in the land were to be utterly slain.

When the Israelites were to make war with peoples not in their heartland, in “cities which are very far off” in Transjordan, they could march right in and have full control with no opposition and the Jewish religion being the law of the land *if* those in a city surrendered unconditionally and opened their gates. In the heartland were not only the six blacklisted tribes but also peoples who were more or less natives. If the natives of a city surrendered and became tributaries, the Israelites proclaimed peace unto them. However, if the people of a city refused to make peace, the Israelites were to make war against them and besiege the city.

Again we are reminded of Jesus’ instruction with regard to proclaiming the gospel. Before knocking on a door, the Christian would say, “Peace be to this house.” If the response was favorable with submission, an open mind, and a hearing ear, peace rested on that house.

**Comment:** One problem in not killing all the inhabitants of a city is that the women would tell the children, “This land should have been yours, but the Israelites stole it from you.”

After the Flood, divisions occurred with Noah’s progeny up in Turkey. Shem was more or less slow in migrating to the south, but Ham’s children—Canaan and onward—descended quickly.

In fact, Egypt was called the “land of Ham,” and Ethiopia was known as the “land of Cush” (Psa. 105:23,27; 106:22). However, when peoples went into Canaan, the situation was a little different because God had something else in mind, and the earth is His (Exod. 9:29; Psa. 24:1). It is *God’s* plan of the ages, and that plan will be carried out!

The instruction for killing would seem to be very brutal, but this was war. However, *if there was no resistance*, mercy could be shown except for the six peoples blacklisted in verse 17. The idea of owning the land in Israel is still a problem today with the Palestinian people, who claim to be the original Canaanite settlers. To surrender meant that the people would become Jewish proselytes, with only the worship of Jehovah being tolerated—and in *His* way, not with man’s innovations.

**Comment:** In regard to the slaying seeming brutal, life is a gift from God. Not only can He give life, but He can take it away. In addition, He knew those people would be raised from death in the general resurrection.

**Reply:** Yes, since the entire human race is under the death sentence, whether one dies today, tomorrow, or 50 years from now is immaterial from the standpoint of justice. Knowing about the resurrection, the awakening from the tomb, the future opportunity for life, puts an entirely different light on the subject. However, for those in the world who do not know God’s plan, the killing appears to be one-sided, unjust, and cruel.

**Comment:** Those who became subject to the Law as tributaries or proselytes enjoyed the privileges of the Law. By allowing the Israelites to come in without war, they were blessed.

**Comment:** We are also beneficiaries in the United States because the founding fathers drafted much of the Constitution on the principles of the Mosaic Law. Where the Bible travels, civilization prospers.

**Reply:** Yes, wherever the Bible has gone, its influence has been a blessing either directly or indirectly.

Verse 14 states, “But the women ... shalt thou take unto thyself.” Without going into details and definitions, we will just say that there was some connubiality through acquiring concubines in addition to Israelite wives, who had a different status. Hagar was an earlier example with Abraham.

As a general caution, there are exceptions both ways. Once we finish this outline study of the Book of Deuteronomy, we should be a little more mature in our understanding and thus be able to converse freely and go into more of the details. It is very foolish to make decisions on deeper scriptural understanding when we do not know much. A lot of problems in the movement today have arisen because brethren who come into present truth think they “know it all” after a while. As a result, they draw certain conclusions or acquire habits of thought that are injurious to themselves and to others. We are supposed to be Bible students, but it takes time for elders to really know the Bible. Gray hair should be a sign of wisdom, but many do not have mature scriptural reasoning.

**Deut. 20:16** But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

**Deut. 20:17** But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

These six peoples were to be rooted out. What counterpart should we extrapolate from this picture? Six different categories forbidden to the Christian are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:11, “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be [1] a fornicator, or [2] covetous, or [3] an idolater, or [4] a railer, or [5] a drunkard, or [6] an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” If we know that one of these categories is the true situation, we are not even to eat at the table with such an individual.

“Canaanites” in the heart must be put to death in the war between the old man and the new creature. The old man is desperately wicked and exceedingly deceitful and uses clever reasoning (Jer. 17:9). The Christian has an inward battle.

**Comment:** Proverbs 6:16-19 reads, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” The “seventh” is pictured by the Gergashites.

**Q:** If the iniquity had come to the full with the Amorites, the same condition would have applied to the other five peoples. Did each of the six blacklisted peoples have the “giant” seed in them? At the time the Israelites entered the land, were they told to slay all of them because of contamination with the *nephilim* seed?

**A:** The seed of the *nephilim* was exterminated on the far side of the Jordan River before the Israelites entered the land. In Israel proper, this mixed seed existed up until David’s day, when conditions changed. Saul was helpful to a certain extent in uprooting the seed, but it continued until David’s time.

**Deut. 20:18** That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

Verse 18 gives the reason for following the instructions of verses 16 and 17 and utterly slaying the Amorites, Hittites, etc., namely, that they not teach the Israelites “to do after all their abominations” in connection with worshipping false gods and thus cause them to sin against Jehovah. The exceeding sinfulness of sin, the infectious influence of wrongdoing, is shown in the text “Evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (1 Cor. 15:33). To think we are so positive in our beliefs that nothing will change us is comparable to the Apostle Peter’s statement he would never deny the Lord, so we must be careful. We should guard against using the words “never” and “always” because once we make such a strong statement, the Lord will show us we are not what we think we are. We must not be so confident as to think we can go into a dangerous situation and then prosper. If we are going to move, we should search out a place that is spiritually helpful. It is one thing if God’s providence forces us into a peculiar situation, but when we can make the decision, we should study whether a particular move would be helpful or harmful to the new creature and not go where there are no brethren, for instance. Although we are not under the Law, it gives us excellent Scriptures and guidelines for our Christian walk. As God’s thinking, the Law instructs us.

**Deut. 20:19** When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man’s life) to employ them in the siege:

**Deut. 20:20** Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt

**destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.**

When making battering rams, the Israelites were not to cut down any fruit trees. What foresight! Not only was the enemy city to be captured, but assets that could be used later were to be preserved. The Law is wonderful.

**Deut. 21:1 If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him:**

When a slain body was found in a field with no witnesses of the crime, a process was to be followed to try to determine where the responsibility lay.

**Deut. 21:2 Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain:**

The elders and the judges were to measure to see which city was closest to the crime scene.

**Comment:** Also, they were to investigate to see if anyone held a grudge toward the victim.

**Reply:** Yes, they would first try to identify the slain person and then search to see if anyone hated him.

**Deut. 21:3 And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke;**

In lieu of any witnesses or clues, the nearest village or city was considered more likely to be the residence of the party who was slain as well as the perpetrator(s).

**Comment:** A spiritual lesson is that the ecclesia nearest to where a morals infraction occurs with a brother or sister is to handle the matter in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5.

**Deut. 21:4 And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley:**

A heifer, a female cow, was taken to a rough, uncultivated ravine and there killed.

**Q:** Was the purpose of a “rough” valley to show the violent and turbulent nature of the crime?

**A:** Yes, it suggested violence, and the heifer represented the purported innocent victim. His innocence was presumed because the case or grudge was not handled in the proper manner. The victim should have been brought before the judges by the one who had the grievance. In other words, a legal process should have been followed by having a fair trial so that justice would be done instead of murder being committed.

**Q:** Was the blood allowed to go on uncultivated land lest it contaminate the soil where crops were grown?

**A:** That observation is interesting, although the primary reason was the violence of the crime.

It is significant that the heifer was slain in an uncultivated valley, for normally, except for a red heifer, the animal was offered on the altar as a sacrifice for sin. The special case described here

was an exception to the general rule whereby expiation for sin was performed on the altar.

**Deut. 21:5** And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

The priests, the sons of Levi, were called in for the procedure to be performed. Thus the personages involved in the judgment to be rendered were the elders of the city nearest the body of the slain, the judges of that city or area, and a priest. The details of the case had to be ascertained. Notice that, contrary to the way cases are settled today, the case was to be tried where the crime had occurred.

**Deut. 21:6** And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley:

**Deut. 21:7** And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.

**Comment:** Verses 6 and 7 call to mind Pilate's washing his hands before the nation of Israel to indicate he was innocent of what would happen to Jesus.

**Reply:** Yes. Apparently, Pontius Pilate, a Roman, was following a Jewish custom in washing his hands (Matt. 27:24). Evidently, this practice was rather common in some nations.

**Comment:** With the elders of the city having to make a public statement, they were liable if they knew what had happened and did not disclose the details.

**Reply:** Yes. Before washing their hands, the elders tried to make sure no one in their precinct was responsible for the crime. Of course the investigation took time—it was not done in one day—before the ceremony was finalized. If they could not find anyone after making a proper search and inquiry among the inhabitants of the city, the elders made this public confession: “Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.”

The Book of Leviticus mentions that in connection with certain crimes of different natures, a diligent search had to be made. If one saw or heard a serious wrong, including even cursing, or got information secondhand, he was responsible for inquiring further and investigating in order to free himself from further guilt. Thus he had to honestly try to get a verification one way or the other in regard to the incident that had occurred.

**Comment:** In the particular vicinity where the searching was to be done, a person might be troubled in mind and come forth with some pertinent information.

**Deut. 21:8** Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.

**Deut. 21:9** So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

**Comment:** Jesus said to the nation of Israel at the First Advent, “That upon you [on that generation] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Matt. 23:35). The shedding of righteous blood required expiation.

**Reply:** Yes, that was true when innocent blood was shed, and there is a relationship to these verses in Deuteronomy.

**Q:** Is there a spiritual antitype?

**A:** In the Kingdom Age, the Church will not have to search very far, for as spirit beings, they will be aware of all the facts. The lesson for Christians is that in the gospel Church, the responsibility for wrongdoing lies in the local ecclesia. Whatever the nature of the untoward behavior, the local ecclesia is responsible for searching into the matter. The brethren must not avoid the issue or close their eyes. If the matter is serious enough, they are required to make it known to others so that there is no guessing and no violation of conscience where others do not know whether to avoid someone. By making known the facts, they help the consciences of others so that those brethren are not unnecessarily troubled. Moral issues, for example, must be straightened out. Of course we are not to be policemen of the whole movement unless the brother is well known outside of the local ecclesia. Normally speaking, the responsibility lies in the locale of the incident, and excommunication, at least temporarily, is the action to be taken in a serious case (extortion, adultery, fornication, etc.). Hopefully, then, the person will come to his senses and make a proper confession.

**Comment:** Christians can kill the influence of their brethren by evil speaking, so the matter needs to be investigated.

**Reply:** Instead of someone literally killing a person in the brotherhood, the parallel form of wrongdoing would be railing, evil speaking, assassinating one's character. The slanderer would have to publicly confess his guilt. Proper procedures would then be followed by examining what the Scriptures say to do in such cases. In other words, there are enough examples in the Bible to enable us to render proper judgment.

Most evil speaking is second- or third-hand information. A person sometimes judges on improper evidence that a person is guilty because of what someone else said. It is assumed that because a person is consecrated, his testimony is true. When something is in question, a slang expression is to go to the "horse's mouth," that is, to the principal(s) involved rather than to listen to secondhand or tertiary information.

**Comment:** Why was the heifer's head chopped off?

**Reply:** For one thing, the animal had to bleed. The slaying took place in a rough valley to make sure that the animal was not misconstrued as a sacrificial offering. For instance, it was not to be confused with the ashes of a red heifer, which were taken to a clean place outside the camp, that is, to a special area that was pronounced clean (Lev. 4:12). In contradistinction, the heifer here was taken to a rough, uncultivated ravine or valley. It was not to be confused in any manner with a sacrificial offering in holy environs that had a ceremonial cleansing value.

**Comment:** Then chopping off the heifer's head was just blood for blood.

**Reply:** Yes, that is right.

**Deut. 21:10** When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive,

**Deut. 21:11** And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

The taking of a beautiful woman was allowable only in those instances where live captives could be taken, for in some cases, all the inhabitants of a city were to be put to death. At other times, it was permissible to take the women and children captive. Therefore, the thought for verse 11 is, “And seest among the [legitimate] captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife.”

**Deut. 21:12** Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

**Q:** What does the expression “pare her nails” mean?

**A:** The woman was to cut her nails because the customs of heathen nations included having long and/or painted nails and even lettering on the nails. To “pare” is an Old English word that means “to cut” or “to trim.”

**Comment:** By shaving the head, paring the nails, and putting off the clothing of her captivity, the Israelite man purged the woman from her old life and prepared for her new life as a Jewess.

Under Jewish law, the hair was cut off for a Nazarite vow. This act meant putting off the old deeds as far as possible, and the new hair that grew—that is, whatever hair had grown for the length of the vow—was to be cut at the end of the vow and offered back to the Lord. The new hair represented the deeds of the new life, which were proffered to the Lord in obedience to the vow and thus were acceptable.

**Q:** From a practical standpoint, shaving the hair, paring the nails, and removing the captivity raiment made the woman unattractive in appearance. Was one purpose of these actions to give the Israelite man opportunity to think twice and let his passion cool so that he could change his mind about marrying her?

**A:** The previous explanation was the primary reason, but this thought could be an additional reason, a practical one.

By these practices, shame was brought on the enemy to a certain extent. Now the women were to obey Jewish customs and procedures instead of the practices of their former life and people.

**Deut. 21:13** And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

**Deut. 21:14** And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

If a man took a woman from among the captives and subsequently did not “delight in her,” an allowance was made for divorce, as it were. However, the man could not make merchandise of the woman when he freed her. Although no details are given here, a legal divorce ceremony was an implied procedure. Details given elsewhere in the Law were probably referred to by Jesus when he made statements like, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time” (Matt. 5:27).

**Comment:** There was a penalty if the Israelite man was not pleased with the woman and wanted to get rid of her. Therefore, some roadblocks were set so that he did not carelessly and



thoughtlessly take her. For example, a period of time was involved, and she lost some of her attractiveness. If he did not want to keep her, he lost her as a servant and did not receive any monetary value.

**Reply:** Yes. Otherwise, some men would want to get satisfaction from a beautiful woman but with the ulterior motive of then selling her to someone else. If an Israelite man had pure and noble motives, he would be loyal to the Lord and bring the woman up in the worship of God.

**Q:** If the Israelite man had no delight in the woman and let her go in time, could she return to her own nation?

**A:** Yes, she was free to go back to her parents, her homeland, or wherever she desired. Very often, even among heathen nations, a divorced woman was almost guaranteed widowhood, for no one then wanted to marry her. The practice was to marry virgins.

**Deut. 21:15** If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated:

Right away we are reminded of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. What principle is involved here? A man had to be just in connection with the inheritance of his sons. The firstborn son had certain priorities not only during the existence of the marriage but also with the inheritance. When a father died, the wealth and goods of his estate were divided among the children, and the firstborn got a double portion. To calculate the double portion, a man took the number of his sons and added one. For example, if he had 9 children, he divided the inheritance by 10, giving the firstborn  $2/10$ , or  $1/5$  (20 percent), and each of the others  $1/10$  (10 percent).

As we think on this principle, what other instances or principles come to mind?

**Comment:** God took into account man's fallen nature. He foresaw that without a law, people would skew the results.

**Reply:** Yes, and if something was once skewed, a precedent would be set. Then little by little, the marriage relationship, as pictured in the Law, would be denigrated.

**Comment:** One could fall from firstborn status by selling the birthright, through disobedience, etc. For example, Reuben lost the birthright of the firstborn through wickedness (1 Chron. 5:1).

**Reply:** In other words, there were some exceptions, but the loss was predicated not upon personal hatred but upon a violation of the principles of God's Law. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, showing how little he appreciated the privileges and the responsibilities of the firstborn.

**Comment:** "Hated" in this context means "loved less."

**Reply:** Yes, the Hebrew word *sane*, meaning "to love little" or "to love less," has a different connotation than our definition of "hated."

**Comment:** If there was a tendency, based on human nature, of one wife to outmaneuver another wife in regard to the inheritance of her son, God gave man the direction to take. The husband did not have to trouble himself with emotional details, as it were.

**Reply:** Yes, the Law clearly stated the procedure to be followed under both normal and strange conditions. Examples were given both ways.

**Deut. 21:16** Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn:

In regard to the inheritance of an estate, a man could not favor the firstborn son of his beloved wife with the double portion if a wife whom he loved less had borne him a son earlier. In other words, whoever was truly the firstborn was to get his due inheritance.

**Comment:** 1 Chronicles 5:1 reads, “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.” The birthright did not go to the firstborn, the second-born, or the third-born sons of Leah because of their heinous sins.

**Reply:** Yes, four sons were born to Leah before Rachel had even one son (Gen. 29:32-35). The sin of Reuben is specifically mentioned here, but the same principle applied to Simeon and Levi, causing them to lose the birthright. The birthright went to Leah’s fourth-born son, Judah, through whose lineage Messiah came.

**Deut. 21:17** But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

**Comment:** Isaac was unaware that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob.

**Reply:** Both this incident and Isaac’s giving the birthright to Jacob were recorded in the Book of Genesis, the events of which occurred before the Law of Moses was given. Thus an exception was already noted in the sacred canon before the Law was laid out at the end of the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. It should have been clear to any judge how to settle an estate because enough information was given to render proper judgment.

**Q:** Earlier the question was asked, “As we think on this principle [of the inheritance of the firstborn], what other thoughts come to mind—either other instances or other principles?” Was something specifically in mind?

**A:** From another standpoint, Abraham’s three wives—Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah—represent three covenants. In later life, we have noticed a tendency among some brethren in scriptural reasoning; namely, if ten verses in the Old Testament disprove one text in the New Testament, they discount the Old Testament and think the New Testament proves their point. We find out by questioning these brethren that they have not really looked into the subject. Thus, to clearly understand God’s thinking on a matter, one cannot go by just one statement in the Bible but must have two or three witnesses (Scriptures). The principle in Bible study is here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept (Isa. 28:10). Therefore, if a person renders a hasty judgment based on one Scripture that seems to prove his point, and someone else brings up other Scriptures that seem to negate the point, the reality is that a “thus saith the LORD” in the Old Testament is certainly as valid as one in the New Testament. The point is that in fairness, we have to read the *whole* Word of God and not specialize in just the New Testament. Many Christians have not read the entire Old Testament word for word, whereas most have read the old Law Covenant, the Grace (or Sarah) Covenant, and the New (Law) Covenant.

**Deut. 21:18** If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

**Deut. 21:19** Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

**Deut. 21:20** And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.

**Deut. 21:21** And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

Verses 18-21 are a general law. Under extreme circumstances, there could be an exception, but generally speaking, if the procedure was followed, then proper judgment would be given in almost all cases.

Notice the procedure. The father and the mother first chastened their son. If he did not hearken, they brought him to the elders of the city for judgment, and in some cases, the priests were also involved. The word of the parents was not necessarily sufficient. Therefore, another one or two witnesses outside the family would probably be obtained to try to verify the statements of the parents, for some parents are abusive and short-tempered by nature. A trial took place, brief though it might be. If it was determined that indeed the child was rebellious, he was put to death.

Notice what is not stated. (1) The age of the “stubborn and rebellious son” is not given, but to be a glutton and a drunkard, he would have to be at least a teenager. (2) The parents had to cast the first stone. We learn this fact from other information in the Old Testament. By throwing the stone—even if more gently and just in the direction of their son—the parents incurred the responsibility for what was done. If they had acted properly, they were justified, but if they had a secret, improper motivation, they were guilty before the Lord. To us the procedure seems abnormal, because the mother who brought the child into the world would be emotionally involved.

The New Testament contains something vaguely along this line in connection with the stoning of Stephen. Paul did not throw any stones, but he held the coats of those who did the stoning. Inferentially, it appears that he eagerly volunteered to do this service because he was so in sympathy with the stoning. Therefore, even though Paul held the coats before he was a Christian, he incurred responsibility by acting willfully as an adult and as a Jew under the Law. Before he finished his course, he had to be stoned and left for dead as retribution. The slate had to be wiped clean.

**Comment:** The stoning action was hard for the parents to take. How much easier it would be for them to overlook the sins of their son, but the reason was, “So shalt thou put evil away from among you.” Again the Word of God was stressing the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The Father was trying to sear into the Israelites’ minds the necessity to put evil out of their midst, even at the cost of one so dear to them. Not only were the parents not to be in sympathy with the sin, but also they were to act to eliminate it. As was said of Jesus, “[Because] Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:9).

**Comment:** In Old Testament times, there was to be a sense of community responsibility. This command shows the responsibility of both the parents and the elders of the city. As brethren, we should have a sense of responsibility for the younger ones in our midst, even from the standpoint of being a positive influence and an encouragement to them.

**Comment:** With the antitype being excommunication, the word “all” is important: “*all* the men of the city shall stone him with stones.” All the members of an ecclesia should be like-minded in a case of grievous, unrepented-of sin.

**Comment:** It helps to know there will be a general resurrection. Otherwise, the abrupt cutting off in so many cases would be hard to understand. Actually, the cutting off was both just and merciful, for the errant one died before he became incorrigible.

**Reply:** The point of the commands in Deuteronomy was to deter the leavening effect of being too tolerant toward either sin or the enemies of Israel.

Some may want to introduce the Parable of the Prodigal Son here with the principle of repentance, but in the parable, Jesus was teaching the Jewish nation a new gospel that applied under different terms than the keeping of the Mosaic Law. He introduced mercy and forgiveness, whereas no mercy or pity was to be shown under the Law. The parable was primarily a lesson for Christians, who are under the Grace Covenant because Jesus died for their sins. A new arrangement became possible whereby God could show mercy, whereas a different lesson was taught in Old Testament times. In the future, after the Gospel and the Kingdom ages have ended, the perfect Law of God will be full blown, and anyone who commits sin at that time will be exterminated without mercy. Thus the Law will come back with just as much force as it theoretically was to have—and did have to a large extent—when Moses was alive. After his death, leniency and corruption of the Law took place. Fortunately, the entire human race was condemned through Adam, and under the new arrangement for the Gospel and Kingdom ages, retrieval is possible. The commandments of mercy that Jesus introduced were quite extraordinary for Christians, and mercy will also be extended in the Kingdom Age through the new Mediator.

God’s Law is perfect, so one had to perfectly obey it to get life. The temporary permission of evil, which does not denigrate the Law at all, was the best and wisest plan for the human race. However, after the Kingdom Age, perfect obedience will be required forever. No more will evil be permitted, and no longer will mercy be extended. We can empathize with those who do not understand God’s plan of the ages. How hard it is for them to understand His dealings in Old Testament times! People have empathy for Jesus and his ministry above the Father, for they think of the Father as being hard and cruel and Jesus as being more loving and kind. Of course this view is distorted. The wisdom of God will not be fully seen until His plan of retrieval, forgiveness, and redemption comes to fruition with the human race. Then, looking back, the saved of mankind will see that what they misunderstood as cruel and unkind was actually the best plan that could have been implemented to provide a knowledge of evil so that it would no longer be a temptation. Desiring the unknown and wanting to open Pandora’s box seem to be inherent in us because we are inquisitive by nature. It is wonderful to study the Law, but it is even more wonderful that we are under grace.

**Comment:** Verse 18 calls the son “stubborn and rebellious”; verse 20 states he was a glutton and a drunkard. In other words, he was of no benefit to either himself or society. When such a one was stoned to death, Moses said, “All Israel shall hear, and fear,” for not only was the individual involved but also the parents and the nation. The punishment showed responsibility.

**Reply:** A certain segment of society are like parasites by nature. Unless such individuals get rid of that destructive trait, it is just as well that they are purged from society because of the leavening influence of sin.

One of the many signs of the end times is being “disobedient to parents,” and Paul listed other undesirable traits as well. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For

men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, *disobedient to parents*, unthankful, unholy, *Without natural affection*, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

**Comment:** Eli did not take care of his evil sons.

**Reply:** Yes, he was disobedient. Eli and Samuel both had disobedient sons, but since Samuel did not incur guilt, we can infer that he reprimanded his sons. While the Scriptures do not go into detail, he handled the matter properly from God’s standpoint, whereas Eli did not. We do not know everything that happened in the past, but sufficient information is given to help us in the process of learning to be kings, priests, and judges.

When Eli fell over backwards upon hearing that the Ark had been taken by the Philistines, he represented a Second Death class. Of course the type does not necessarily indicate that Eli himself will go into Second Death, but the laxity with his sons pictures a class who will not get life because of misusing responsibility. He should have put his sons out of office immediately. The Law was so leniently held by that time that thousands should have been stoned to death, but the action could not be taken because the judicial arrangement was weak and disorganized. Therefore, the best that Eli could have done was to disown his sons and bar them from service in the Tabernacle arrangement.

**Comment:** Aaron also had a problem with two disobedient sons.

**Reply:** Yes, and for that reason, we think the priesthood in the Kingdom Age will be reckoned from Zadok, not Aaron. In other words, Aaron will not lead the services in the Third Temple. Although his judgment was deferred during his lifetime for the sake of the type, he will feel lack of service to the quick in the future, for the people in the Kingdom Age will see that the new priesthood is from Zadok onward.

The end of verse 21 is strong. “So shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear” because of the proper example.

**Comment:** God’s wisdom is shown here. Not only would the parents hear and fear, but also the children. They would know that serious consequences result from rebellion against God. The same principle applies to disfellowshipping in the New Testament. Excommunication is a help not only to those in the ecclesia but also to the individual who has sinned.

**Deut. 21:22** And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

**Deut. 21:23** His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

This teaching is familiar to us, but we do not normally think much about the necessity for the body to be taken down and buried before sunset lest a curse come on the land: “that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

**Comment:** The person was first stoned to death, and then the corpse was hung on a tree. Jesus was treated contrary to the Law, for he was hung alive on the Cross.

**Reply:** When Jesus was crucified, a shock wave went over his disciples, and those of the public who had received some healing or benefaction were also shocked to see or hear of his fate.

**Comment:** Under the Law, the body was hung on a tree because the individual “committed a sin worthy of death.” The corpse was disposed of quickly to prevent a long mourning period.

**Reply:** Yes. For one who incurred such a penalty under the Law, there was no decent or honorable burial, normally speaking. During the period of consecration, we are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus, so to a certain extent, the true Christian is out of harmony with the world during his lifetime. The world views the Christian with reproach, but the suffering and reproach are a favorable indication in God’s sight.

**Comment:** Sin started with the fruit of a tree. Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her lead. As a result, the curse came on Adam and also on the earth.

**Q:** Was this command given as a prophecy not only that Jesus had to die in Adam’s place, and thus be a curse and die as a sinner, but also that he had to die on a “tree” because Adam hid behind a tree after he sinned?

**A:** Yes. Jesus’ experience on the Cross was related to the Garden of Eden and to the penalty of death that came on mankind as a result of Adam’s disobedience.

**Comment:** Galatians 3:13 reads, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

**Deut. 22:1** Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.

**Deut. 22:2** And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.

**Deut. 22:3** In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother’s, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.

Any animal, garment, or property that was lost was the responsibility of the one who found it. He then had to try to restore the animal or goods to the owner *whether or not he knew the owner*. Meanwhile, he was to care for the animal until it could be returned to or was claimed by the owner. If neither occurred, the animal or goods were his.

**Comment:** Presumably the person who found the animal, garment, or property had to make inquiry and actively try to find the owner so that it could be restored.

**Reply:** Certainly effort was to be made to restore what was lost to its rightful owner.

Jesus used excerpts from this principle in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and also with the Pharisees, who criticized him for healing on the sabbath. For example, he said to the Pharisees, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?” (Matt. 12:11). And the good Samaritan took care of the injured party, a stranger, and even paid money for his care.

There is another point as well. One might not want to take the lost article or animal into his possession because he would not want to make the effort to restore it to its rightful owner. Even that attitude was wrong according to the Law. The temptation was very subtle and searching lest one fall into that trap. Likewise, an injured person should be helped. As stated in the Golden Rule, we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

**Comment:** In regard to the natural tendency to not render help, James 4:17 states, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

**Q:** Can we extract a spiritual principle along the lines of being our brother’s keeper? If we see there is a spiritual loss, we should try to help the individual.

**A:** Yes, and there are other ramifications as well. Sometimes a party attends meetings regularly but does not get the fellowship and just sits in his seat, especially in a large congregation. In such cases, we should make a point of going over to the party, sitting next to him, and saying a few words to make him feel wanted.

**Deut. 22:4** **Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.**

Verse 4 is the same principle as verses 1-3. However, the words “lift them up” stand out. In other words, *effort* was to be exerted. At the time of seeing the ass or ox “fall down by the way,” the person might be dressed up or en route for another purpose, but that was no excuse for not getting involved and helping his brother to lift up the animal.

**Comment:** The Scriptures go further, for even if the animal was owned by an enemy, the one who saw the condition was to assist in lifting up the animal.

**Comment:** With regard to the Kingdom Age, Amos 8:5,6 shows the wrong heart condition of those who will not follow this instruction. Their selfish attitude will be, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”

**Deut. 22:5** **The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.**

Today, when women wear pants with great frequency, the rarity is to see a woman wearing a dress, and an even greater rarity is to see one wearing a modest dress. However, there is a deeper principle than just the outward infraction of the Law by a woman wearing a man’s clothing. The implication when a man or a woman is wearing clothing of the opposite gender is homosexuality or lesbianism, or at least a tendency in that direction.

**Comment:** The intent is what matters. It is wrong for a man to dress with the intention of looking like a woman or vice versa. In some countries, the custom is for women to wear a dress over pants and men to wear a long garment. And in Scotland, men wear kilts on special occasions—not because they want to look like women but because of their culture.

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, the man pictures Christ, and the woman pictures the Church. Therefore, a woman should not usurp power, the teaching prerogative, over a man in the Church. And the man should not usurp prerogatives of Christ by ruling over the sheep.

**Comment:** With the frequency that women wear pants to meetings and Bible studies, their

posture and the way they sit are often affected. Women sit more ladylike if they wear a skirt.

**Comment:** The wearing of pants by women is entirely overdone. In going to the Lord's house, women should wear a dress or a skirt, unless of course they have nothing else to wear. Outdoor activity, such as climbing a mountain, is another matter, as common sense would tell us. Our mind should be prepared for attending a prayer meeting or a meeting with spiritual food, for example, and part of that preparation is appropriate dress. The length of hair is another factor. A man's hair should not be unduly long or a woman's hair overly short.

**Reply:** In some instances, lack of moderation or abnormality in dress or appearance seems to be an outward sign of rebellion. Along another line, many women today refuse to wear head coverings. At a convention years ago, we were happy to observe the behavior of brethren in regard to a young woman wearing a very short dress who sat in the middle of a row of about ten seats. To our surprise and delight, we noticed that brethren did not enter that row and sit down.

**Deut. 22:6** If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:

**Deut. 22:7** But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.

Why could the eggs or the young birds be taken but not the mother bird?

**Comment:** This command was merciful to the young birds, for if the mother were taken, the young would starve. However, if the young birds were taken for a specific purpose such as breeding, a person could hand raise them. And the eggs were a source of food. In other words, the prohibition was against causing wanton injury.

Many years ago the thought troubled us that animals were slain in abattoirs to be eaten, especially since those who raise cows often know them by name. But as we matured, we began to realize that the animals had a good life before they were butchered—time to eat, rest, etc. The situation is somewhat the same with humans. We are born young and healthy and have fun times growing up, but eventually we have to die. To a certain extent, we were assuaged by this practical realization.

**Comment:** Verses 6 and 7 prohibit going against nature. Research that genetically alters what God created is wrong.

**Reply:** Improper handling is also wrong. When we visited a place that raised chickens for market, we were dumbfounded to see that they were cooped up all their life in a cage with scarcely enough room to move. Not only were the birds prevented from developing much muscle so that they would be tender, but they were overfed to the point of bloating to get added revenue from increased weight gain. The pitiful chickens could hardly walk. In other places, cows are never let out to pasture but are kept indoors their entire life. This type of cruelty is bestial.

**Deut. 22:8** When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

**Q:** Is a "battlement" like a guardrail?



**A:** Yes. Back in Old Testament days, roofs were flat, and they were used for various purposes such as drying fruit. Therefore, they needed fences lest one fall off and get hurt. In the last 150 or so years, many ordinances have been passed requiring “guards” of various types as safety measures. For instance, a chain saw must have a guard. In the business world, employers are to have safeguards and provide for the protection of their employees.

In many fishing villages in the past, people who lived on a higher elevation had a battlement, or railing, over their porch so that they could look out to sea when their loved ones were expected to return. The men went out deep-sea fishing for a week, a month, or even a year.

**Q:** Since the Scriptures liken the new creature to a house, is verse 8 saying that the Christian has to put up a fence for two reasons: (1) to keep himself from temptation and (2) to make sure he does not violate the conscience of others or do something to hurt them spiritually?

**A:** Yes, that principle is certainly inculcated. The new creature is to put up a fence to prevent spiritual danger. Not only is he to avoid temptations to self along the lines of a known weakness, but he is not to do something to cause temptation to others.

**Deut. 22:9** Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.

Different types of vegetable and fruit seed were not to be mixed in the sowing process. Here the sowing of a vineyard was particularly mentioned. The spiritual application, which is especially important, requires a lot of contemplation.

**Comment:** Different seeds produce different types of plants, and each requires individual care. To mix them causes confusion and inhibits plant growth.

**Reply:** In other words, neither crop will grow well, for one interferes with the other. Thus there is much waste in mixed sowing. Moreover, harvesting one crop might root up the other prematurely.

**Comment:** A vineyard is an established garden with the stock being developed over a number of years. The caretaker would not plant a different kind of seed in the vineyard, for his goal is perfection.

**Reply:** The Jewish settlers who have land in the Gaza Strip planted successful vineyards there. It took years for them to build up their crops, and now they have to evacuate in short order. We can appreciate the extreme trauma they are going through after expending such labor.

From a new-creature standpoint, earthly thoughts should not be mixed with spiritual thoughts. A long sermon could be given with many applications of the principle of not mixing different kinds of seed.

**Comment:** Those who are thoroughly consecrated want to please the Lord. Sometimes, in order not to hurt feelings, others are invited whose minds and hearts are natural. Holy seed should not be mixed with unholy seed.

**Reply:** The principle is that evil communications corrupt good conduct (1 Cor. 15:33). In study meetings many years ago, when brethren were having deep, serious discussions on the lesson, a consecrated brother habitually interjected jokes and humor, which inhibited and disturbed the meeting. That brother will probably pay a good penalty for his behavior.

**Comment:** Along a practical line, the term “brother” should not be used for someone who is not consecrated. Also, the mixture of angelic and human seed at the time of the Flood was obnoxious in the Lord’s sight. By extension, this principle would also make the Trinity obnoxious, for the thought is that Jesus was half God and half man.

**Deut. 22:10** **Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.**

To plow unequally with an ox and an ass would be unfair and frustrating to both animals. The stronger animal would waste energy, and the weaker animal would struggle. Spiritually speaking, the Christian should not be unequally yoked with an unconsecrated person in marriage, business partnerships, etc. Of course it is a different matter if the relationship was formed prior to consecration. Sometimes when both are consecrated, the husband and the wife are not equal in spiritual perspectives, but the stronger may be able to balance the other. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” is the principle (Amos 3:3). There are times when a wife helps her husband who goes astray on a matter, trivial or serious, and vice versa.

From another standpoint, differences in capability should be discerned. Two brethren should not be assigned to the same task when there is great inequality in the capabilities of the two. For example, wisdom should be used in selecting brethren to serve on a panel. It is unwise to have a less mature brother as chairman or to give him undue time.

**Deut. 22:11** **Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.**

Wool and linen were not to be mixed in a garment. Wool comes from an animal and linen from a plant; hence they are from two different kingdoms. The priesthood wore sacrificial garments made of linen, for wool would have caused too much perspiring. Even from a visual perspective, the mixture would not be pleasing. Linen or wool is in the warp and woof of the garment, which is internal, whereas the garment is external.

The principle is not to camouflage the reality. From the spiritual standpoint, the Christian should not mix the robe of Christ’s righteousness with a Babylonish garment or the old man. Hence this mixture is another aspect of trying to blend the consecrated and the unconsecrated. One example would be the excessive or inordinate use of cosmetics by a consecrated woman. Many lessons can be extrapolated from verse 11, and none of us are perfect. From another perspective, the Law is not to be mixed with the gospel.

**Deut. 22:12** **Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.**

The fringes were to be “upon the four quarters of thy vesture,” that is, they were to go all around the perimeter of the garment, which was a large prayer shawl. The shawl was used on special occasions in going to the synagogue.

Why were “fringes” to be used? Numbers 15:38-40 reads, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a-whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.” The fringes represented the commandments of the Lord. The custom was for the males to utter a particular type of prayer that enunciated the various commandments.

In *Tabernacles Shadows*, the prayer shawl with fringes was the high priest’s blue robe, which had

bells alternating with blue, purple, and scarlet pomegranates on the hem (Exod. 28:31-34). In the antitype, the pomegranates, which are full of seeds, represent the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

These prayer shawls gave rise to Rosary beads in the Roman Catholic religion. As two fingers are put on each of the Rosary beads, a special type of comment is made by memory. And prayer wheels were used in the Chinese religion. A boxlike container rumbled around a rod, which had rough spots, so that a sound was made like a rattle.

**Comment:** At the Wailing Wall, the Jews have a narrow scarf in their hands.

**Reply:** Yes, that scarf is the prayer shawl, which they can put over their head or carry in their hand. It was used when one was in the prayer mode. Just as Jews put Scriptures on their doorposts, so they sewed phylacteries into their garments. Someone took a leading role, but the others knew what the particular reading of the day was. They went from one fringe to another with their fingers as they prayed. The fringes were usually separated with a bead, a bell, or another type of object—something to separate each fringe from the next one. The fringes were a help to the memory. Stated another way, these were memory shawls. Just as some of the Psalms are alphabetically arranged, acrostic style, so the fringes were aids to the memory. Instead of being merely perfunctory, the prayers, as originally intended, were to be meaningful meditations. In a chorus, others joined in with the individual who took the leading role at the Wailing Wall or in the synagogue. Of course when prayer shawls were used in a private home, the person followed another method. Unfortunately, the prayers became parroted incantations after a while and thus lost their original purpose.

Prayer shawls were intended as an aid for remembering God's Word. In fact, the shawl itself represented the Word, and the fringes symbolized the commandments, or instructions, in the Word. In addition, the prayer shawl was a covering. Although a lot was involved in the concept of the prayer shawl, it was, basically speaking, a helpful tool for memory.

The type is a pure picture. The prayer shawl was both a modus operandi to put one in the proper mood for prayer and a memory aid to assist in communication or reverence before God. The Law is packed with information that is expressed in only terse statements. In the days of Moses, the Law was understood, and the role of the Levites was to instruct.

**Deut. 22:13** If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

**Deut. 22:14** And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

**Deut. 22:15** Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

**Deut. 22:16** And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

**Deut. 22:17** And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

Verses 13-19 describe a common practice or custom among Greeks, Italians, and Jews, but most people are not familiar with history. Instead of evolving to a higher level, mankind today is becoming more and more degraded in morals. Europeans regard those of the United States as falsely sanctimonious. Our professions along the lines of moral character are considered

relatively meaningless and self-righteous.

When a marriage took place, usually the next morning the father got the token, or evidence, of his daughter's virginity; namely, the breaking of the hymen stained the cloth. This proof was very important in preventing fraud, for the man wanted to marry a virgin. Although the hymen could be ruptured by accident, such an occurrence was rare.

In this case, the husband was the guilty party. By lying about his wife's virginity, he was trying to find a way of divorcing her to marry someone else. As those who are familiar with the Hebrew realize, some matters were stated strongly in the Law, but the translators of the King James and other versions intentionally softened the Hebrew. In verse 17, the translators could not get around the strong language lest the meaning be lost entirely. Another example of a crude statement is "any that pisseth against the wall," but sometimes we need tough language in order to get the point (1 Sam. 25:22). The Apostle Paul drew many lessons in his sermons from points stated in the Law. Some Christians feel that the Law is dry reading, like reading figures and the Book of Numbers, and that it is not spiritual. Thus they skip over the Law and concentrate on just the stories and the New Testament. However, to be faithful, we cannot be selective with the Word of God. The study of the Law is profitable, as long as we do not contend, like the Adventists, that justification comes by the deeds of the Law.

**Comment:** With prearranged marriages, the man might try to get out of the marriage by defrauding his wife.

**Reply:** There are many ramifications, of which this is one. Another ramification is that at the time of the marriage, the husband received an endowment from the wife's family. Most marriages down through history were prearranged.

**Deut. 22:18** And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;

**Deut. 22:19** And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

"Amerce" means "fine." In a case where a husband falsely accused his wife, giving her an "evil name," he was required to pay his father-in-law 100 shekels of silver, a significant amount, and had to remain married to his wife for the rest of his life. Notice that the elders of the city where they lived were involved in adjudicating the case (verses 15-18).

**Deut. 22:20** But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel:

**Deut. 22:21** Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

In verses 13-19, the woman was innocent, but in verses 20 and 21, she was guilty. If she was not a virgin at the time of the marriage, the penalty was extreme—she was stoned to death at the "door of her father's house" for having played the whore while under his roof. While Roman and Greek and other cultures had strict laws, the judges winked the eye at murders, or vengeful killings, along this line. Cities of refuge were established in Israel where a person could flee until the case was adjudicated to determine the guilty party. Under Greek, Roman, or Jewish laws, the affair was considered private, and the party would go free if he (or she) was innocent, with murder being excused as a crime of passion. Today the tendency of defense lawyers in the Western world in trying to exonerate or get a light sentence for a client is to say

that the person was mentally unfit or that the crime was one of passion.

**Comment:** If a daughter was not a virgin at the time of the marriage, the penalty was enacted at the door of her father's house. This requirement shows the responsibility of parents who raised a daughter—and thus God's thinking in the matter.

**Q:** If the husband was guilty, he had to pay money and keep his wife, but if the wife was guilty, she was stoned to death—a much stronger penalty. Why was there such a discrepancy?

**A:** The discrepancy occurred because of the antitype. Christ is pictured as the Head of the Church, and he is considered inviolate because of his faithfulness to God. Therefore, God, who knew the end from the beginning—and thus that Jesus would be faithful—showed favoritism to the man in the Law; that is, He showed favoritism because of the symbol that is involved. While the penalty stated here is disproportional, Divine Providence took care of the matter with the guilty man ending up with his share of punishment. Outwardly, there was only a token penalty, but in reality, there was a providential penalty as well. By the extension of this principle, a lot is going on in the world's affairs that we are not aware of in the present life, but the retribution will be seen in retrospect in the future. While in a special sense, God is dealing with the nation of Israel and consecrated Christians, national dealings such as earthquakes are also taking place. In the future, reasons for and the timing of great national disasters will be revealed. In short, the symbolism of the Law is written for our edification, whether it pertains to the natural Jew or to the spiritual Israelite.

An example of this principle of *outward* penalties being greater for the woman than for the man is seen in the case of Aaron and Miriam. Both accused Moses of taking too much responsibility upon himself—both sinned—but only Miriam got leprosy. Aaron was not penalized at the time because he was the high priest. However, he will get a penalty, for the priesthood in Ezekiel's Temple during the Kingdom Age will go back to Zadok, not to Aaron. A lot is happening of which we are unaware because the Bible gives us only the basic instruction that is needful for our development and that of the Jew, who is still under the moral Law of Moses.

Although males were favored under the Law because of the symbolism, that favoritism will not exist in the future. Before Adam, all of the angels in heaven were created as males. The Pastor correctly extrapolated that ultimately, in the future, there will not be any more sexual procreation. Physical procreation was the *modus operandi* to teach the permission of evil, but it will eventually be abolished. When faithful Christians are given the divine nature and immortality, they will all have the same male sex. To reason much beyond that is going into the field of speculation, as the Bible avoids such information. Most of us are prone to be inquisitive, so we have to carefully set bounds lest we search beyond that which we can sense would have divine approval. How the other planets will be populated we are not told, but there are other ways than the method we are familiar with. The permission of evil is a temporary expediency for a wise purpose.

**Deut. 22:22** If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

Verse 22 is a case of adultery between a man and a married woman. The implication is that the woman did not protest; she did not call out.

**Comment:** If all of these laws on sexual immorality were followed today, many people would be put to death. It almost seems that the great Time of Trouble would not be needed because most of the human race would be out of existence.

**Deut. 22:23** If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

**Deut. 22:24** Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

If a virgin who was betrothed to a husband and a different man had relations, they were both stoned to death. This violation took place in the city, and the virgin did not cry out in protest.

**Comment:** Verse 24 characterizes the damsel as “his neighbour's *wife*,” even though she was just betrothed and not actually married at that point.

**Reply:** Yes, a betrothed woman was violated. However, the betrothal was a signed contract back there and thus was considered very sacred. Although the two parties were not yet living together as husband and wife, the contract was binding. The custom of contractual marriage was as good as done, and cohabitation of the husband and the wife was the next step.

**Deut. 22:25** But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:

**Deut. 22:26** But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter:

**Deut. 22:27** For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.

Now the violation occurred “in the field.” In this case, because the betrothed woman cried out when she was forced by a man, she was considered innocent, and he was stoned to death.

**Q:** How would such a case be handled? Would the elders question both parties to ferret out the truth? How was the matter proven, for she would claim rape, and the man might deny his wrong? Was there a miraculous way of determining guilt?

**A:** Yes. As shown in verses 15-18, the elders were on hand for the trial to sort out the judgment to be rendered. Depending on the complexity of the case, the high priest was called in to give a more miraculous examination. The damsel then had to partake of the jealousy offering, which meant drinking dust from the floor of the Tabernacle mixed in water (Num. 5:11-31). If guilty, the woman died.

The Law of Moses is stated succinctly in the Bible, but those few pages are packed with information. Thus, in a few words of the Bible, God came to the core of different situations to help us understand without having to pour through endless books. To the contrary, today's law schools have thousands of books upon which decisions are based.

**Deut. 22:28** If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;

**Deut. 22:29** Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away

**all his days.**

In this case, a man lay with a virgin who was not betrothed. Since she did not cry out, consent is implied. The man had to pay 50 silver shekels to the woman's father and marry her for life because he had "humbled her."

**Deut. 22:30 A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.**

A New Testament violation of this command is 1 Corinthians 5:1, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."

By extrapolation, Ham's sin was "discover[ing] his father's skirt" when he accidentally saw his father's nakedness. When he told Shem and Japheth, his two brothers entered Noah's tent backward and covered their father with a garment. "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him" (Gen. 9:20-24).

**Comment:** The NIV states, "A man is not to marry his father's wife; he must not dishonor his father's bed."

**Reply:** The NIV translation takes liberties. The King James is preferable.

**Deut. 23:1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.**

**Deut. 23:2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.**

**Deut. 23:3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:**

**Q:** Since verse 1 pertains to procreation, would the antitype indicate that to be faithful, a Christian must have the ability to bring forth spiritual children?

**A:** Yes. If the Christian does not have that ability within himself, then his spiritual standing is questionable.

**Q:** Does the term "congregation of the LORD" refer to the whole camp or to the Tabernacle?

**A:** It can have either meaning depending on context. Without much context here in verses 1-3, the determination is much more difficult.

Verse 1 is hard to understand. One reason is that the type in the Law had to be accurate in order to ensure that the antitype fulfillment would be correctly understood, but of course when we study Deuteronomy, we should try to understand verse 1 from the standpoint of the Law. Sometimes in trying to reason on difficult subjects, we take the easier parts first. For instance, verse 3 states that "an Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of

the LORD; even to their tenth generation.” Ruth the Moabitess was an exception to this rule. However, she came into the truth, as it were. She had been married to a Jew, and her husband died. Subsequently, she left the land of Moab and returned to Israel with Naomi, her mother-in-law, and said that Israel’s God would be her God. This background information is helpful in showing us a way out of the dilemma of Ruth’s being an exception to the rule. She was a proselyte to the Jewish faith under the circumstance in which Boaz took her to wife, and the Messiah eventually came of that lineage. The Scriptures contain no hint of disapproval of this exception during the time of the Law.

Out of the seeming enigma of verse 1, we can put the emphasis on the expression “shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD,” that is, “shall not come from the outside in.” In other words, in that circumstance, the individual could not become a Jew because from the physical or literal standpoint, he could not change the situation. Even if an Ammonite became a Jew, he would not be able to disassociate himself from his background, as Ruth was able to do. Similarly, Abraham left the land of Ur of the Chaldees and obeyed God’s instructions. In regard to verse 1, therefore, it seems that the individual under this peculiar situation would not be allowed to enter into the association of Israel in the sense of being accepted as a proselyte.

We repeat that verse 1 is difficult to understand, and we are struggling to harmonize it with other Scriptures. However, another situation seems to have some bearing; namely, the Moabites and the Ammonites were the offspring of the two sons of Lot who were born as the result of an incestuous relationship with his daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:31-38).

**Comment:** A note from years ago states that the word “bastard” in verse 2 refers to incest and thus does not have the signification of our word today. If that thought is accurate, it reinforces the pertinence of the incestuous start of the Moabites and the Ammonites.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true. A “bastard” in this context is the child of a couple too closely related for marriage, for instance, the child of a brother and sister of the same mother, or the child of a son and his mother.

**Comment:** The Amplified contains the following notation: “It must be remembered that according to the Jewish Law, the children followed the father, not the mother. Take the family of Boaz, for example. Although Boaz’s wife, Ruth, was a Moabitess, his family was considered Israelite, including his wife.”

**Reply:** Yes, that reasoning must also be considered.

**Comment:** Another Bible note indicates that a male Ammonite or Moabite was meant.

**Reply:** Yes, that comment applies to the time of the Exodus. A point is misunderstood back there, but the male gender is involved, for a male “is wounded in the stones.”

**Q:** Why were ten generations required before a bastard, an Ammonite, or a Moabite could enter the congregation of Jehovah?

**A:** From a literal standpoint, that length of time was required. Again, this subject is very deep. From a certain perspective, the Ethiopian eunuch was “wounded in his stones.” He was probably made a eunuch because of his high position. Also, some present a strong argument with regard to Daniel and the three Hebrew children being made eunuchs, yet they were all regarded favorably. Therefore, the definition here in Deuteronomy is wanting, for we do not have the detailed explanation that was known by those who lived at the time of Moses. Those



living under that culture understood the nuances of verse 1. Since we live many years later in a Western civilization and do not have the benefit of that culture, the majority of the consecrated have studied the Law very little and, in fact, have scarcely even read it. The truly consecrated may have some familiarity with the Old Testament, but as far as the details are concerned, little is known. The culture of favoritism for the New Testament can lead to the other extreme where many feel all one has to know is Matthew 5–7 and 1 Corinthians 13.

Back to the question. Instances are given that guide us to say that these terms are not properly and thoroughly understood today. The key to the situation with the bastard, the Ammonite, and the Moabite seems to be the thought of an incestuous relationship, but why were ten generations required for those three categories to be allowed to “enter into the congregation of the LORD”? Verses 7 and 8 state that the children of the Edomite and the Egyptian “shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.” Thus in this chapter, both the third and the tenth generation are mentioned. Sometimes the word “generation” refers to a time period more than to a genealogical lineage, but generally speaking, the word refers to an age limit where the elderly die and a new generation comes forth. There are rare exceptions, however. Although the word “generation” is not actually used in Psalm 90:10, it is definitely inferred. There a generation is described as 70 years, or perhaps even 80 years. The word is expressly stated in Genesis 15:16, “But in the fourth *generation* they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” That statement was uttered about ten years after God made the covenant with Abraham. The “fourth generation” was fulfilled when the Israelites left Egypt and were journeying to the Promised Land. From the Abrahamic Covenant to the Exodus was a period of 430 years. There the word “generation” refers to a chronological perspective. In fact, a good part of Genesis 15 is along chronological lines. The ages of the animals were added up. God said to Abraham, “Take ... an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon”; that is,  $11 \times 360 = 3,960$  years (Gen. 15:9). The point is that Genesis 15 is a chronological chapter, and the word “generation” is specifically used to refer not to the succeeding living generation but to an age or time period. The word “generation” (Hebrew *dor*) literally means “circle,” which agrees with the thought of a semicircle representing an age. Also, *Strong’s Concordance* gives “assembly” as one definition of the word “congregation” (Hebrew *gahal*).

Now we have three generations and ten generations, but the ten generations represent  $3 + 7$ . Three generations were involved in making the Jewish nation, that is, from Abraham to Isaac and through the death of Jacob. Here a time period and lineage were combined. When Jacob died, the seven generations began. In other words, the Jewish Age comprises seven symbolic or figurative days of unequal length, just as there are seven days, or periods of time, of unequal length in the Gospel Age. The Kingdom Age will also consist of seven time periods of unequal length. The three preceded the seven.

Next comes the explanation of ten generations along religious lines. When a Jew accepts Christ and consecrates, he escapes the prerogatives of the Law. However, a Gentile was never under the Mosaic Law. Many types of the Law pertain to the Kingdom Age, and when that age comes, there will be a whole new equation and freedom. As Christians, we get that liberty in the present age because we have accepted Jesus and the Cross. Just as our past was a different situation, so it will be for the world in the Kingdom Age; that is, what a person’s previous situation was will become a different type of arrangement. Leviticus 1–7 pertains to the Kingdom Age, whereas chapters 8, 9, and 16 apply to the Gospel Age, with the sixteenth chapter introducing the Millennial Age. This subject is deep, and in reading the Old Testament verse by verse, we are confronted with certain difficulties. We have to try to extrapolate a proper perspective. Exceptions noted in the Scriptures seem to justify that the terms need better understanding as to what disqualified one from the congregation of God.

**Q:** If the “stones” of a Levite were “broken,” he was barred from being high priest, yet he did not have to stay without the camp (Lev. 21:20). He was disqualified from a public ministry, but his food was supplied. Therefore, why would the expression “shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD” bar individuals from the camp and not just the Tabernacle service?

**A:** It is true the Levite was barred from Tabernacle service in that case. For that reason, we have said the words “congregation” and “generation” are a deep subject. Some of the simplest words are the deepest subjects of the Old Testament, let alone the various offerings. When once understood, they are sharply understood. However, these two terms are wanting, and we think there is a great lack of understanding on our part. We need more explicit instruction in the future, whereby we can look back and see these expressions in their true perspective. Now, because of our culture, they are difficult to understand. As Rudyard Kipling said, “East is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall meet.”

**Comment:** These verses are bringing in the collective sense. The people as a whole are making judgments.

**Reply:** Yes, the Lord has indicated exceptions—currently dark sayings—that will be startlingly revealed in the future.

**Deut. 23:4** Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

**Deut. 23:5** Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.

**Deut. 23:6** Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.

Verses 4-6 pertain to verse 3. Instead of taking the upper road, the King’s Highway, the people of Israel had to go down in the desert alongside the mountain range on the east side of the Dead Sea in their travel northward toward the Promised Land. However, the cloud shielded them day and night from the rigors of the desert, moderating any discomfiture they might have experienced in taking that particular route. For what would have been an exhausting period of time, the Lord compensated with assisting graces such as their apparel and shoes not wearing out. Thus their potential hardships were overruled so that they did not perish. The Moabites had no compassion for the Israelites’ needs, even though Moses had promised the Israelites would not enter Moabite land or take anything. They simply wanted to go through on their journey to the Promised Land. The Moabites refused to provide the bread and water that would normally be needed in desert travel. Thus are shown the experiences that God’s people, both natural and spiritual, encounter in their pilgrimage journey to the Promised Land.

There are two instances in Scripture where a curse was turned into a blessing: (1) with Balaam and (2) with King Saul. The Israelites complained and had many trials that weeded out those who were unfit. In the final analysis, with the younger generation entering the Promised Land, approximately 2 million people left Egypt and 2 million entered the land. What characteristics of the Jew does the Lord like that cause Him to favor that people? The major reason is for the fathers’ sake, going back to the faithfulness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Another peculiarity is their strong character. When their eyes are properly opened, they are most outstanding in their loyalty to Christ and God. For instance, Paul was the leading apostle, yet earlier he was responsible for the death, persecution, and imprisonment of some of Jesus’ disciples. When his eyes were opened, that fixity of purpose was channeled in the right direction to become a leading and beneficial quality. Along another line, the wildest of the untamed mustangs and

horses become the best horses when broken in. They are so obedient and sensitive to doing the will of their master that a bullfighter can go into a bullring without reins and just use his knees to direct the horse. It is as though the spirit of the rider is in the horse, and the horn of the bull will just miss the horse. Similarly, when impetuous Peter was tamed, he became a solid rock, and not the unstable character he was prior to consecration. As we get older and read his epistles, we see that several portions are equal to the writings of Paul, even in the choice of words. Here was an unlettered man who was remarkably changed—a fisherman in his early life who became like the Apostle Paul! Of course Paul was superior as an apostle, but with the example of Peter, we see what the Holy Spirit can do to the wildest of people prior to consecration. It was similar with the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Jesus said that those who are forgiven much love much (Luke 7:47). Thus the orneriness of the Jew, when converted and changed, produces a superior race to those who just want to live peaceably. We can understand a little better why God chooses some whom we would consider not fit for the Kingdom. He sees the inner man—what can be done.

“Thou shalt not seek their [the Moabites' or the Ammonites'] peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”

**Comment:** Basically, God was saying to the Israelites, “I will be your peace and prosperity. You do not need them from others.”

**Deut. 23:7** Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.

**Deut. 23:8** The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

**Comment:** Because Esau was Jacob's brother, the Edomites had more favor than the Moabites and the Ammonites.

**Q:** We normally think of Edom as picturing Christendom, and Egypt as representing the world. Is the Christian being told not to abhor those in the nominal systems, even if they are not true Christians, or those in the world, for we have to live in the world?

**A:** Yes. There are two different perspectives with Edom, but when Edom is being compared with Egypt, the representation as expressed is valid.

**Deut. 23:9** When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.

**Deut. 23:10** If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:

**Deut. 23:11** But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.

**Deut. 23:12** Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:

**Deut. 23:13** And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:

**Deut. 23:14** For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Verses 9-14 cover delicate matters and show God's interest in some of the daily duties and circumstances of life. A distinction was made, giving two perspectives, of the signification of the term "without [outside] the camp." From the standpoint of a person in the Court of the Tabernacle, "without" was outside the camp. The average reader does not catch the distinction here that there were two places "outside" the camp. One place pertained to a very personal matter with the male sex, having to do with uncleanness and ceremonial cleansing. When something happened, the man went outside the camp to that locality. In addition, a large area was set aside outside the camp to serve as the "bathroom," or lavatory. With 2 million people, that area had to be large. In addition to these two distinctions, other Scriptures tell that a third place was also outside the camp, but that area is not the subject of discussion at this time.

Moses was taking God's perspective in regard to this procedure. If God walked through the camp, the Israelites would not want Him to step in offal. Moses reasoned, "Wouldn't you be ashamed to have that happen?" It is true that the camp was to be kept sanitary and that Bible dictionaries emphasize the hygienic standpoint, but verses 12-14 are stated from a religious or holy standpoint. For example, if an honorable person of state visited our country and saw or stepped in excrement, we would be horrified and humiliated. Moses was reasoning, "We are dealing with the Almighty God, who comes down here and communicates with man in the Most Holy. Then He walks through the camp to see what is going on. What should we do in that circumstance? We must keep the camp holy." If one went to battle with an enemy, any carelessness in this regard might affect the outcome of the battle, thus preventing a victory.

These verses give us an insight into the character of Moses. He was brought up amidst royalty. Not only was he instructed with all the wisdom of Egypt, but he was a great general in warfare and had a lot of other training. We believe that everything in the royal palace was circumspect and orderly, and we should copy this good breeding. These principles train us not to be slovenly or careless, especially when we come into the house of the Lord. For example, even the mood frame of the Christian should be proper, without frivolity or a foreign atmosphere. The environment should be conducive to holiness.

Many years ago we saw a lot of violations along this line. People came into the meeting room, the house of the Lord, and told jokes, and even during the meeting itself, there were jokes and wisecracks. The Apostle Paul said to have "neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4).

**Comment:** Another Scripture is 1 Timothy 3:14,15. "These things write I unto thee ... that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God."

What makes Moses' words even more startling is that the Israelites were in the desert, but even in the wilderness, they were to be circumspect. If we are to be kings and priests, we have much to learn. For example, if someone asks how we feel on a particular day, we can reply, "There is always room for improvement."

Notice how the paddle was transported. It was attached to one's weapon—a sword, a bow and arrow, or something else. The paddle was taken to battle so that it was always available. By their words and lack of understanding, many Christians reveal that they have not read the Old Testament in detail, but every word that comes out of God's mouth is profitable and needful for us. We must continue to be Bible students, *learners*, and not to have so many "teachers."

**Comment:** If a man had the problem of uncleanness (verse 10) when the host was going forth to battle, he could not fight on that day.

**Reply:** That is correct. In addition, a newly married person was exempt from military service. This stipulation helps us with the Gideon picture. Of the original 32,000 men of war, 22,000 left. Of the remaining 10,000, only 300 remained as the separation continued. The nitty-gritty details in the Book of Deuteronomy have a bearing. The study of the Law is very informative because it is *God's* thinking. In fact, a study of the *principles* of the Law is just as important as a study of the gospel. We are entranced with the gospel because of God's mercy to us, but throughout eternity, throughout the endless ages, the Law will always be in force and operative. The Law will be mandatory both in the Kingdom Age and beyond. The temporary permission of evil and its results could not be a better plan, but never again will the permission of evil have to be repeated. What happens here on earth is being photographed so that all of God's future creations will look back to the one example and see its outworking.

**Deut. 23:15** Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:

**Deut. 23:16** He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.

**Deut. 23:17** There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

**Deut. 23:18** Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Three situations are discussed in verses 15-18: how the Israelites were to deal with (1) a slave, or servant, who escaped from the servitude of a former master; (2) a whore; and (3) a sodomite. In the first situation, the implication is that the servant fled from his former master because of abuse and cruelty. In many countries back there, an escaped servant was returned to his master, who often put the individual to death. In fact, servants were branded with the master's identification mark. Verses 15 and 16 were practical advice for those living in Moses' day. The escaped servant would have difficulty finding employment, especially since he was a stranger coming into Israel. Another principle applied here as well; namely, the Israelites were to remember that they had been strangers in Egypt. The Egyptians treated them well in the beginning because of Joseph, but generally speaking, even as time went on and bondage occurred, the Israelites were well fed. Proof is that when the Israelites were in the Wilderness of Sinai, they wanted to return to Egypt for the leeks, garlic, and cucumbers. Moreover, they had places of rest after the day's labor. Yes, they were under servitude, but at least they were respectfully treated in regard to personal matters.

Moses made a distinction between the Egyptians and other nationalities, such as the Moabites and the Ammonites. Much had to do with a nation's treatment of the Israelites. When they were treated well, the foreign nation got a blessing, and if a nation did harm to the Israelites, a price had to be paid. That principle has operated with the Gentiles. A common saying is, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psa. 122:6). To some extent, President Bush's helping Israel has helped the United States, whereas Europeans are anti-Semitic and justify the Palestinians.

Not only was the runaway slave, or servant, to be treated with reason and moderation, but he was also allowed to settle where he chose. In other words, the Israelites were to do unto others

as they would have others do unto them. The Golden Rule applied in the common affairs of life. We can see how the Jewish Law has invaded the culture of the Western World. The laws of Europe and the United States have codified many of the basic principles of the Jewish Law.

With regard to a whore, the custom of other nations has been to have professional prostitutes and even in temple worship. The Roman religion had vestal virgins, and the revenues of prostitutes were paid to the temple coffers in Asiatic religions. God said there were to be no whores of the daughters of Israel.

The sodomite was a male, the practice being so abhorrent that we will not give details. Thus the females had problems, but the males were even worse in some respects. As already stated, these subjects are delicate.

**Deut. 23:19** Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:

**Deut. 23:20** Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

“Usury” is interest charged to the borrower. Probably the Law was better kept in Moses’ day than at any other time in history. After he died, wrong practices crept in. Fortunately, the men under Joshua had no time to engage in extensive mischief making, for they were constantly fighting and preoccupied with conquering the land. Joshua was just as strong in principle as Moses, but after his day, with very few exceptions, the people no longer got leprosy, died of a plague, etc., for wrongdoing, so sins multiplied. When punishment did not follow a wrong deed, problems occurred. That is why Christ has to reign with an iron rod. More is needed than just instruction, for discipline can be learned only through enforcement for a period of time in the learning process.

By nature, whether we realize it or not, we are guileless people who can be easily deceived. Because we cannot read the motives of others, we give credit to brethren, presuming that they love the Lord as we do. Although that attitude is proper, we must be discerning. For instance, some people, ostensibly brethren, have extensively borrowed money and goods from the friends. Unfortunately, there are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus said we are to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16).

Instead of loaning to brethren without interest, we find that it is advisable to just give what we can without expecting any return. Then the one who receives the benefaction will not ask again, whereas with a loan, a person tends to want a little more and a little more to supposedly pay back.

**Deut. 23:21** When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

**Deut. 23:22** But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

**Deut. 23:23** That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

The key words in verses 21-23 are “a freewill offering.” Many have concentrated on that expression because years later, when they understood the truth of God’s Word, they used that

particular phrase to release themselves from the vow. Although that reasoning would be proper in some cases, there are very few instances in Scripture where a consecration vow can be negated. Since verses 21-23 are plain statements, we do not need to discuss their intent, but we want to see why the term “freewill offering” was used. The clause “that which is gone out of thy lips”—that is, “what is stated with thy mouth”—implies that the original consecration commitment was made in prayer. However, subsequently the consecration vow is usually accompanied by a public confession, which is an additional testimony. Our promise to the Lord is the most vital, but confessing to others is like a second testimony.

Certain strange circumstances might arise such as the following, where a father could release a daughter from her vow (Num. 30:3-5). “If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father’s house in her youth; And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she has bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.” Therefore, for a father to release a daughter from the obligation of her vow, two circumstances had to apply. (1) She was living in the father’s household in her youth. (2) He had to freshly hear about her vow. However, if he did not know about the vow for some time, then when he became cognizant of the vow of his daughter, a minor living in his home and thus under his authority, he could make it null and void.

Another circumstance, as stated in Numbers 30:6-8, is that a husband could release a wife from her vow. “And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered aught out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her.” The implication is that she was young. Another extenuating circumstance was where the wife was not cognizant of her husband’s thinking at the time the marital arrangement was made. The point is that there were exceptions where a vow could be disannulled.

Martin Luther and others who made vows to become a monk subsequently left the Roman Catholic Church to marry. They reasoned that while they ostensibly made the vow to the Lord, it was done under duress or peer pressure, so it was not a freewill offering. Usually the conversion was to the church, not to God. When such a vow was made, the individual was obligated to the church and its ministers. To the contrary, a “freewill offering” is a vow made of one’s own initiative.

Another exception was Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:1-19). After being cured of leprosy, Naaman, a general in the Syrian army, said to Elisha, “I know your God is the true God, but I have a problem. The king leans on my arm and depends on me to support him when he goes into the house of Baal to worship. Could an allowance or an excuse be made under that circumstance?” An allowance was made for Naaman, when he said, “Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules’ burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing. And he [Elisha] said unto him, Go in peace.” When Naaman asked permission, an accommodation was made that he could take some dirt from Israel back to Syria to kneel on when he prayed to Jehovah, thereby making his prayers acceptable in that heathen land. Naaman desired, and

was granted, mercy under this peculiar situation.

And there are other exceptions, but they are not to be taken lightly, lest we excuse someone or give advice that is not applicable, thus bringing upon them a penalty in which we will share for leading and encouraging someone to go astray. The point is that there can be extenuating circumstances, but a freewill vow of consecration to the Lord is binding. The question is, When the vow was initially made, was it made from the person's own appreciation of what God had done for him? With such a vow, the individual is obligated to keep it and cannot say later on, "Maybe the Lord did not accept my consecration." This excuse does not release one from his vow. A good question to ask someone who is contemplating this excuse is, "Under what circumstances did you initially make your consecration vow?" When the vow is made of one's own volition, it should be considered binding. We have to be very careful in giving advice, especially since we hope to be kings and priests in the next age. We would be unfit for such an office if now, in the practicing stage, we made foolish errors in such serious matters, for they affect the life and destiny of other individuals.

**Comment:** "Thou shalt not slack to pay it [the consecration vow]" means that we should not say, for example, "If I get a college degree or accept this promotion, then eventually I can devote more time to the Lord." We should pay the vow *now* and not procrastinate.

**Reply:** That principle pertains to decision making, which is related to keeping our vow. We should not set our *own* standards of what the Lord's will is. Such *human* reasoning as to what we think should happen and what we think would be better has led many to go out of the truth. Accepting a promotion to become an executive can so wed one to the business that he forgets his vows.

**Q:** If a young child of consecrated parents were to say that he or she wanted to make a consecration, but the parents knew the child was not ready because of immaturity, how would the situation be handled?

**A:** How can a child sit down and really count the cost of what is involved? The child should be encouraged in the desire to consecrate but advised to wait. The parents could say, "That is a wonderful thought, but you should wait a little while until you are older and can see what is involved. The Lord loves you for desiring to consecrate." Then the parents could give some examples of why it is advisable to wait.

**Q:** If the parents tell the young child to wait, but the child goes ahead and consecrates, does the Lord see that vow as a valid consecration?

**A:** The Heavenly Father is the arbiter, for He can disannul the vow.

**Comment:** In another case, a 12-year-old daughter consecrated, and when the parents found out, they said she would have to wait until age 16 for public immersion. That is what happened, and now, years later, she is still faithfully keeping her consecration vow.

**Comment:** Numbers 30:4,5 is to the point, for the parents know the child. If the father hears the child's vow and holds his peace, the vow stands. By not disallowing her, the father is indicating that he feels the child can keep the vow.

**Reply:** Under the Law, if the father heard of the vow and remained quiet, not voicing his disapproval by sundown, the vow stood. However, under certain other circumstances, the parent could also disannul the vow.



**Comment:** Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 reads, “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin.” It was not necessary for Ananias and Sapphira to vow their all, but once they did, they were obligated to follow through.

**Reply:** That was another type of vow, but nevertheless, it was a contract. Because the contract was fraudulent, they paid the penalty, which symbolizes Second Death. And of course they were mature individuals.

**Comment:** Ecclesiastes 5:2 reads, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” Years later we should not say of our consecration, “I did not know what I was doing.”

**Reply:** That depends on when the vow, the contract, was made. In making a vow to the Lord, one who is very young may include something that brings cognition on God’s part. That matter we cannot judge, but we should not add to the vow later to change it for our benefit. However, if at the time we make a vow, we incorporate a contingency, God can still recognize the vow, but to subsequently add a contingency is another matter.

**Deut. 23:24** When thou comest into thy neighbour’s vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.

**Deut. 23:25** When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.

**Comment:** Verses 24 and 25 were a provision for the traveler, especially the long-distance traveler on foot.

We are reminded of Jesus’ going through the field on the sabbath and plucking grain to eat (Matt. 12:1-8). The Pharisees improperly added the prohibition about the sabbath to the Law. Hence their learned(?) objection was unscriptural. In other words, one could eat his fill on the spot but not harvest or store up any food. Under the Law, an exception for the poor was allowed whereby the corners of a field were not to be reaped, but that situation was different from a traveler passing through. In fact, after a field had been harvested, if some of the crop remained, the owner could not return to the field to finish the work. What remained—the gleaning work—was for the poor. Thus there is a difference between the general harvest and the gleaning harvest, not only in the type but also in the antitype. Both were harvests, but they occurred sequentially.

**Comment:** If someone offers us the fruit from his tree, we should take only what we can eat and not exhaust the crop.

**Reply:** That is true. If, say, 50 people are in the group and they all pick liberally, the tree(s) could be stripped, thus depriving the party of his livelihood. Common-sense reasoning must be used on many of these subjects to decide what is fair. The question should be asked, If we were in that situation, would we want our neighbor to do to us what we are doing to him?

Here we can see the principle that by nature, one should be thinking about others and be given to hospitality. Years ago in youth, we were taught that if a fruit tree was alongside and leaning over the road, we could pick the fruit because it was on the fringe of a person’s property, but

to climb the fence and trespass on his property to enter the orchard would be wrong. The purpose of the Law is to give a few examples from which we, as judges, can extrapolate what is proper and improper, what is just and unjust. Enough evidence is given, but we have to search for it. To not search brings responsibility, especially for the called ones of this age.

“Thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.” To use the sickle would be taking advantage of the property owner.

**Deut. 24:1** When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

**Deut. 24:2** And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife.

**Deut. 24:3** And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

**Deut. 24:4** Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Over the years, many brethren have failed on this principle. Of course if a couple merely separates, the two are free to live together again in marriage, but divorce is another matter. The New Testament gives only two grounds for remarriage: death and fornication. Also, there is a difference between sins that occurred before consecration and those that take place after consecration. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency among some brethren to not make that distinction. When the sins happened prior to consecration, we should not look with disapproval under certain circumstances and make a judgment. However, when the sins take place after consecration, we must guard against going overboard the other way by making scripturally unauthorized allowances. Being consecrated makes sin a more serious matter.

**Q:** Spiritually speaking, are verses 1-4 saying that once we consecrate, we cannot deny our consecration and return to the world? A comment in a study years ago was to the effect that if the woman gets a bill of divorcement from a second husband, or the second husband dies, the first husband cannot remarry her. In other words, if one leaves Father Adam’s house and is espoused to Christ, one cannot leave the second relationship and return to restitution hopes.

**A:** Yes, that is true when we spiritualize verses 1-4. Both the natural and the spiritual work the same way.

**Q:** In verse 1, what is the “uncleanness”? Why would the wife find disfavor in the husband’s eyes? A Bible footnote for “uncleanness” is, “Indecency, literally nakedness of a thing.”

**A:** The “uncleanness” is not fornication or adultery, for those sins required death under the Law, generally speaking. An example is where there is suspicion that the woman was not a virgin at the time of the marriage. The word “uncleanness” makes more allowance for other extenuating circumstances.

**Comment:** A note from a past study says that the wife may have an issue or no sign, or proof, of virginity, even though she truly is a virgin.

**Reply:** Yes, that could be the case, especially under modern conditions. We purposely do not

want to go into details about the hymen, which can be accidentally ruptured. The Law gives us God's thinking. We study the Law to learn what His thinking is on certain subjects, one reason being that the New (*Law*) Covenant will be in operation during the Kingdom Age. Changes will be made, but nevertheless, the New Covenant will be along natural lines. Some Christians have never studied the Law. With the cost of Bibles being so reasonable in our country today, there is no excuse for not being familiar with the Old and the New Testaments. An allowance is made for babes in Christ, the recently consecrated. The responsibility differs according to availability, the length of one's consecration, and other factors.

**Comment:** Verses 1-4 were the basis upon which Joseph, a "just" man, was going to put Mary away privately and not make her a public example. Before the angel Gabriel came to him in a dream, he was not certain about the source of her pregnancy (Matt. 1:19-21).

**Comment:** At first, it is confusing to apply these principles to the Christian, for the consecrated cannot remarry unless the divorce is based on fornication, but the thought about leaving Father Adam's house seems reasonable.

In these situations, God is the judge, and we have to be careful not to say how much good or how much wrong is involved unless explicit information is written in Scripture.

**Deut. 24:5** When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

Here was an excuse for not going to war, and this law was very sensible, for it provided the man an opportunity to raise up seed should he be killed in a subsequent battle. The qualification was that a man had taken "a new wife," that is, his first wife. There are many casualties in warfare, especially in hand-to-hand combat. In some Old Testament accounts, the casualties were in the hundreds of thousands.

The husband got a one-year leave of absence, which gave time for the birth of the baby and three additional months of nourishment with his wife. We are reminded of the law that a kid should enjoy its mother's milk before being slain. Both mother and calf should get some comfort, even though it is short-lived.

**Comment:** There seems to be a spiritual lesson here that usually with the newly consecrated, a period of refreshment occurs before the hard trials start. For example, Stephen had at least a year of consecration to the high calling before his martyrdom.

**Deut. 24:6** No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.

Both the upper and the lower millstone were essential for grinding food. If either millstone was removed, the family was adversely affected. A man might have a whole bag of seed in the hard form—rye, wheat, or barley, the three main staples—but a meal could not be prepared until the seed was first ground.

Verse 6 refers to smaller family-size millstones perhaps six to eight inches in diameter. The two stones, which could be rough like sandpaper, were banged, one on top of the other, to crush the seed, and then they were rubbed back and forth to break open the grain for extracting the pulp and sifting it. Millstones of this type and size were easily transported from place to place, especially by horse, donkey, or camel, wherever the family went. In other words, these millstones were in the ordinary household.

**Comment:** The principle would be not taking any necessity of life for a pledge. When Charles Chiniquy was a little boy, his father died, leaving his mother, his sister, and him in poverty. The Roman Catholic priest seized the one cow they had for milk and cheese.

**Reply:** It was fairly common for the priesthood to take advantage of the orphan and the widow. We would think that when any priest was so cruel, the rest of the priesthood would correct matters. However, that was not the case, for laxity and callousness existed in the priesthood.

**Deut. 24:7** If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

Verse 7 describes kidnapping, the penalty being death. If the Law of Moses were followed today, there would be less crime among the populace. Instead many serious crimes are improperly called “misdemeanors.” It is shocking what the winking of the eye of the law permits and considers misdemeanors. Often the perpetrator does not have to serve prison time but is merely remanded to the custody of his family and given community service to do. Consequently, people take advantage of the system.

Another peculiarity today is that there are too many criminals to house them all. As a result, groups of prisoners serving 10- or 15-year sentences are periodically released early to make room for the imprisonment of current criminals.

**Comment:** The bottom line is, “Thou shalt put evil away from among you [by putting the kidnapper to death].”

**Reply:** Yes. That way society does not have to absorb the cost of housing, clothing, feeding, and educating him.

**Q:** Would verse 7 also be a prohibition against the slave trade?

**A:** Yes. Technically, that would be kidnapping people to sell them.

**Comment:** Most of the slaves got to the United States because individuals went to Africa and kidnapped black people and brought them here by ship. This practice is still going on today in some parts of the world but with children who are sold for prostitution.

**Reply:** Years ago a talented black man wrote an editorial for *The New York Times* about the slave trade. He showed that white men were not the only ones involved in the slave trade. White men went to Africa, where black men sold black adults and children. The writer was trying to show that the slave trade was not as one-sided as it is usually portrayed. Among the blacks were greedy men who found it very profitable to be the go-betweens. Thus every society has evil people.

**Comment:** The United States claims to be a Christian nation under the precepts of God’s thinking and the Law, but how contrary to righteous principles are many of the practices!

**Reply:** Yes. However, as bad as some practices are, at least the United States is a little closer to the Law than most other nations. The European attitude is, “A person is guilty until proven innocent.” Here the reverse is the assumption: “A person is innocent until proven guilty.” The two attitudes are radically different. During the Inquisition, a person of means could falsely

accuse someone of a crime. The victim often ended up in the dungeon—and sometimes for life—for supposedly stealing something as insignificant as a loaf of bread. The Mosaic Law was very fair, and in the final analysis, the judgment of a serious crime took place in the locale where it was committed.

**Q:** Two Scriptures come to mind for a spiritual application: (1) The nominal Church has made merchandise of the “souls of men” (Rev. 18:13). (2) The list of grievous sins includes being covetous (1 Cor. 5:11). Wouldn’t a spiritual example of covetousness be where a religious leader, instead of pointing to Christ, gathers followers unto himself, magnifying his own importance? In effect, he would be stealing their affections from Christ.

**A:** Yes. Leaders of the nominal system were very responsible for the Inquisition of the Dark Ages, using the state as a willing tool to carry out their judgments.

**Comment:** As has been said, all Christians need to study the Law to know God’s thinking and the penalties for various kinds of disobedience. If we are proven worthy of a place in the Little Flock, we have to know the principles in order to judge men and angels (1 Cor. 6:2,3).

**Reply:** Yes, since our calling is to be kings and priests, we should be getting some schooling in the current life to indicate that we would be fair judges if we were given a perfect spirit nature and knew all the facts of the case. However, it is difficult to judge at the present time because we usually get only one side of the story, and a family member or someone we especially like narrates what has happened. We tend to believe what we hear, but the person relating the situation may not have gotten all the facts straight. Prejudice is also a factor. As we hear things, we tend to store up a judgmental attitude, whereas we may not know the other side of the equation at all. If other facts came to light, we might think quite differently.

Unfortunately, most people by nature take the easy road, but if we are to be judges and priests in the Kingdom, we should be responsible for what is available to us within reason. We are not to be the spiritual policemen of the United States, but in the area where we live, we bear more responsibility in connection with our actions. As for cases elsewhere, we have to say, “Maybe the facts are not being correctly reported.” It is very hard to be a good judge, but we should carefully practice mentally, remembering Jesus’ words: “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:2). There should be great carefulness and interest in trying to know how to judge. We are to pray for the fruits of the Spirit, and not just think they will come naturally. In other words, we are responsible for the innate talents we possess and for what we are capable of doing and understanding—according to what is available. We should say “Amen” to God’s choice of the 144,000 members of the Little Flock. Even if we see in the future that the Bride is complete and we are on the outside, we can have complete confidence that God and Jesus know what they are doing. We are striving to be of the Bride class, and we should run the race in the hope of attaining the commendation “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

**Deut. 24:8** Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do.

**Deut. 24:9** Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.

Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 treat the subject of leprosy in great detail. Here, and in other places in Scripture, we just get a general lesson. In connection with the plague of leprosy, there first had to be a diagnosis. In some cases, it was questionable if the malady was leprosy, and in

other cases, there was no question because of the symptoms. The point is that the individual had to go to the priest for diagnosis and remedial action. The process showed how responsible the Levites were for their judgments. The primary objective of every priest was to effect a cure, to save a soul. If it was possible for a person to be saved, the priest was to do his utmost to make sure that happened. Only when the “unpardonable sin” was committed was a priest to make a very stern judgment. Therefore, the Levites will get a higher reward in the Kingdom Age than mankind in general. And the Ancient Worthies will eventually be rewarded with a spiritual resurrection at the end of the Kingdom for faithfully carrying out their responsibilities.

With leprosy, the time period was usually seven days, and there were multiple seven-day periods. The person with the disease sometimes went to the priest two or three times for reexamination. Each time the priest looked for favorable symptoms and treated them, but the individual was not always well enough, from a spiritual standpoint, to be considered cleansed. Thus time periods became important.

From a spiritual New Testament standpoint, the seven days can be considered the lifetime of an individual. Each Christian is given adequate time to make his or her calling and election sure. Ultimately “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). Thus each will be judged according to his own stewardship. Since leprosy pictures sin, the desire was to be cured from this dreadful disease. Incidentally, there are two kinds of leprosy. Today almost all leprosy can be cured by modern technology and medicine, but even 40 years ago a type of leprosy in Ethiopia was incurable except by God. In the type, the person had to exert effort in order to be cured. He had to listen attentively to the priest and follow the instructions as best he could. If so, a cure could be effected unless the disease (the evil) had progressed too far.

Miriam’s leprosy is given as an example in verse 9. Her sin was to think too highly of the family arrangement. Not only was she a sister and Aaron a brother of Moses, but both were older. In those days, the firstborn had privileges. Miriam and Aaron thought that Moses did too much talking and ordering before the public eye, and they felt they should have a share in that work. However, they did have a share. Aaron was the high priest and a spokesperson for Moses, and Miriam evidently had great musical talent and probably a beautiful voice. She was very influential in connection with singing and perhaps also in composing psalms and hymns to be sung. Moreover, she had opportunity to use those talents. But the lesson is that in the present life, we should be satisfied with our lot in God’s arrangement. Any promotions or demotions in the next life are God’s prerogative.

Both Aaron and Miriam transgressed, but Aaron was not punished in this case. His punishment will occur in the Kingdom Age, for in the new Temple arrangement, the Zadok priesthood will officiate, not the Aaronic priesthood. Because of his faithfulness as a king, David will be a prince at that time, but Aaron is missing. Aaron’s retribution was intentionally delayed lest, while he was in the unique position of high priest, the type would be damaged.

Man is judged according to that which he has. The Pastor inserted the word “used,” which is true to a large extent, but sometimes there is no use because one is not given the opportunity of expression. For example, a brother may never be elected elder, even though he has the qualities to be an excellent elder. Such an individual will be abundantly rewarded in the Kingdom Age for exercising the proper degree of patience and fortitude and for maintaining his integrity in spite of that handicap. Thus a Christian may not receive recognition or may lack opportunity because of reasons beyond his control. For example, poverty or one’s appearance may prejudice others from more prominently recognizing him. To a certain extent, the reason may be proper because the high priest in the type could not have a broken foot, extra fingers, etc. (Lev. 21:16-21). However, if faithful under that handicap, the individual will be abundantly surprised and rewarded with a place in the Little Flock, and many who are recognized in the

present life may not be chosen. Each Christian is to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling regardless of how prominently he is used in the Lord's service.

**Q:** When Moses brought Miriam into the discussion of leprosy, was he trying to raise the level of the leprosy? It is one thing to have leprosy based on touching someone else, but it is another thing when God gives the disease to a person. Are two different things being said here?

**A:** Yes, and that is why we have to analyze the Scriptures.

**Comment:** In Miriam's case, envy was the sin that caused leprosy. God also gave leprosy to King Uzziah, who out of pride went into the Temple to burn incense to the Lord, whereas only the priests were allowed to perform that service (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

**Comment:** Spiritually speaking, Miriam was guilty of "not holding the Head" (Col. 2:19). Moses was a picture of both God and Jesus, and she wanted to share in his authority.

**Reply:** Yes, Aaron, Miriam, and the nation should have recognized that God used Moses to open the Red Sea, judge hard cases, etc. They should have seen that he was head and shoulders over all the others in wisdom, for he was the meekest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3).

**Comment:** Aaron might have developed pride when his rod budded.

**Reply:** That is a possibility.

**Comment:** Moses' face shone so brightly when he came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the Law that the people could not look at him unless he veiled his face. This was another evidence that God was dealing with him in a mighty way (Exod. 34:29-35).

**Comment:** Jude 8 comes to mind because we are living at the end of the age. There a Second Death class is described as despising dominion and speaking evil of dignities. Miriam despised the dominion that God had given Moses.

**Q:** Moses said to "observe diligently" what the priests said. Is the incident with Miriam a lesson to us to listen to our elders if they make a recommendation?

**A:** In proportion as we feel an elder is interpreting God's thinking through the power of the Holy Spirit—in proportion as we feel he is being led by God—we should render obedience and recognition. However, the situation is always tenuous. Regardless of who the individual is, the relationship with God through Jesus is conditional because some of the most startling leaders of the past have gone out of the truth. In fact, if blindness comes on an individual, the darkness is so obvious that even the simple can see the party has fallen from grace (Matt. 6:23). What made Bro. Russell unique is that the Scriptures say he would be "a faithful and wise servant" (Matt. 24:45-47). That statement was not made about Luther, Wycliffe, or others. Nevertheless, the Pastor was not an apostle. The Scriptures just tell that the seventh messenger made his calling and election sure (although we know indirectly that the other six messengers were also faithful because Jesus held them in his right hand—Rev. 1:16). The point is to *analyze* what we hear and follow wherever the truth is. We have occasionally said that if one finds better truth somewhere else, he should go there. To make our calling and election sure, we should go where we are fed. We are to follow truth, not an individual. This is hard to do, for we want affection and attention. Sometimes brethren are moved rightly or wrongly by a familial relationship or a particular personality. The bottom line is that we have to be careful.

**Deut. 24:10** When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to

fetch his pledge.

**Deut. 24:11** Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.

Verses 10-13 pertain to lending to a “brother,” a fellow Israelite. If one heeded this admonition, he would get a corresponding blessing from the Lord in being cognizant of the need of a poor person. This principle is in the New Testament to a certain extent. In the Parable of the Penny, all of the laborers got their reward, their wage, at the end of the day regardless of the hour of the day that each entered the vineyard. From Moses’ day up to our Lord’s day and beyond, the custom was to pay daily laborers at the end of the day they worked.

Common sense tells us that one would not want another to enter his house to take a pledge because the person might take something of great value. The individual taking the pledge might not be either honest or fair. Also, to enter a house would violate another’s privacy.

**Comment:** Not being able to go into someone’s house prevented inordinate personal greed.

**Deut. 24:12** And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

Verse 12 reminds us of the incident with Tamar (Gen. 38:6-26). Judah met her by the way, and she was disguised as a prostitute because he had improperly withheld his son from her. She asked for his signet, bracelets, and staff as a pledge.

**Comment:** A poor man had only necessities, so if a necessity was taken as a pledge, the item had to be returned to him at the end of the day.

**Reply:** Yes, because the pledge came out of his very livelihood.

**Deut. 24:13** In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

**Comment:** Verse 13 indicates that a poor person sometimes pledged his own coat. Since he slept in that garment, it had to be given back to him at sundown.

**Reply:** Yes, and the workday was often 12 hours long. In short, the hirer was to observe the Golden Rule. The employer was to be fair and square and do as he would expect if he were the laborer. He was to regard the situation from the standpoint of conditions being reversed.

A pledge was usually involved when security was needed. For certain jobs today, insurance is required; a person must be bonded. The employer needs a guarantee that the employee is trustworthy. The laws of God were reasonable all the way around, and the Mosaic Law was comprehensive.

**Deut. 24:14** Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

We can be sure that anyone who infringed these commands during Moses’ ministry was punished. If hirers of laborers oppressed the poor, the Lord made sure they were rewarded with punishment. Conversely, hirers prospered if they were just. However, not long after Moses’ death, there seemed to be no retribution, so the Israelites became careless along these lines. Many unjust hirers committed all kinds of abuses with purportedly no retribution.



However, they will have to make amends in the Kingdom Age.

**Comment:** The Egyptians abused the Hebrews, not paying them a fair wage. Now the Law was constructed so that the Hebrews would not practice what had been done to them.

**Reply:** Yes, a fair day's wage was to be rendered by sundown—to the “stranger” as well as to fellow Israelites. Both came from the same Creator. We are all lumps of clay. When one is laid in the tomb, his body disintegrates whether he was a king or a poor person.

**Deut. 24:15** At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

“At his day” refers to the day laborer, who worked a 12-hour day, normally speaking. Being poor, he was dependent upon the daily wage, so the sun was not to go down before he received it. Otherwise, he would cry to Jehovah against the hirer, to whom the withholding would be sin. The wife, or mother, was very busy at home, doing onerous needful tasks.

Present conditions are somewhat different in this country, for the “poor” are rich in comparison to those in many other countries. It is customary to receive a weekly or a biweekly paycheck. Nevertheless, when a laborer is hired, there should be an understanding as to what pay he will get and when.

**Deut. 24:16** The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

**Comment:** These sins were against one's fellow man, for this command certainly did not apply in the case of Adamic death.

**Reply:** The laws in the Kingdom will be along the same line. However, as a better Mediator under the New Covenant, Jesus will have the power and the means to see that justice is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17). Moses had that capability to a certain extent but not as searchingly as it will be implemented in the Kingdom. In other words, the principles of the New (Law) Covenant will be the same as those under the old Law Covenant.

**Comment:** In the past, the fathers ate the sour grape, and the children's teeth were set on edge, with iniquity being visited on succeeding generations.

**Reply:** From Adam to the Flood was a period of 1,656 years. There followed 427 years to the covenant with Abraham and 430 years until the Exodus, which occurred in 1615 BC. During that time, the fathers' sins were visited on the children “unto the third and fourth generation” (Exod. 20:5). Some changes were made with the institution of the Law. In specific cases, extraordinary promises were made based on obedience, with warnings of what would happen if the commands were not heeded. However, the common practice is stated in these verses.

**Deut. 24:17** Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

**Deut. 24:18** But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

The Israelites were not to pervert judgment with a stranger, an orphan, or a widow. The “stranger” was a minority in the population of Israel, and the orphan and the widow were

dependent for support. The Israelites were expressly commanded not to take advantage of such individuals by using biased judgment because of their situation, yet Israel did this very thing. After Moses, these practices became rather common. And during the Dark Ages, the priesthood and the nobility commonly practiced these evils, taking extraordinary advantage of those underneath their hire and giving them just enough food to survive so that they could be used again the next day. Owners of castles, as well as monks and priests, did not want to kill the golden goose, but they stripped the golden goose of any excess. There were many poor during a large portion of the Gospel Age. It is true, as Jesus said, “Ye have the poor with you always [both before and after Christ]” (Mark 14:7).

“Remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt.” At least in Egypt, the Israelites had food for several reasons. The soil in the environs of the Nile was extremely fruitful. Also, the Egyptians wanted good, healthy laborers. However, when the Israelites worked, the Egyptians were taskmasters, taking advantage of the people.

**Deut. 24:19** When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

**Deut. 24:20** When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

**Deut. 24:21** When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

**Deut. 24:22** And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

What a wonderful provision for the poor! During the harvest, the limbs of olive trees were hit with a stick so that all the ripe olives would fall off. That little thump was sufficient. What remained was for the poor to glean. In other words, whether the produce was wheat in the field, olives in the trees, or grapes in the vineyards, when some produce remained after harvesting—either accidentally or intentionally—the Israelites were to leave it there for the poor. We are reminded of the field of Boaz in which Ruth gleaned wheat. Noticing her efforts, Boaz instructed his laborers to let some of the grains of wheat drop out of their pail for her to gather. Of course at that point, he never dreamed she would become his wife, especially because of the age difference. He simply gave the command out of generosity of spirit. It is interesting how old some of the husbands were back there—something like Joseph and the Virgin Mary.

**Comment:** In Egypt, the Israelites had to glean the fields for straw to make bricks. Moses was instructing them to remember that experience.

**Reply:** Yes, the taskmasters took vengeance upon the Israelites, forcing them to work overtime to get enough straw for the bricks they would make the next day. In principle, the straw remarkably strengthened the bricks. Similarly, rods are sometimes put in soft cement to provide extra strength and rigidity when it hardens.

**Comment:** Moses frequently commanded the Israelites to remember they had been bondmen in Egypt. This principle applies to us now, and will apply to the world in the Kingdom, in that we are always to remember we were once in bondage to sin and death. The fact we were freed through Christ should make us merciful toward others.

**Reply:** That is certainly an exemplary principle in both type and antitype. In his perfection as the Logos, Jesus looked down at the earth and saw the miserable conditions. The Father felt that to make the Logos an excellent High Priest who could save even more people, it was necessary for him to be perfected for office by suffering himself in the conditions down here. As a people, the Jews are stiff-necked and opinionated, but when they are converted, they will be a changed people. Jesus was willing to come down here in the first place, yet the Heavenly Father saw that the experience would make His Son an even better High Priest. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). God wants to save as many as possible but *without peer pressure*. Everyone has to give a freewill offering to God, loving Him for what He is, not for what punishment would come for disobedience. Even the feeblest one who wants to love and serve God but finds it extraordinarily difficult to do so in the flesh will be saved—if that is his motivation and drive every day. However, such individuals might be overlooked if it were not for our exceptionally sympathetic High Priest. God’s mysterious methodology works wonders.

Gathering the remaining sheaves of wheat in a field, a small number of olives in the trees, and a few grapes hidden by the leaves on a vine are a gleaning work. Antotypically, we are living in the gleaning period of the Harvest, which follows the general Harvest. Basically speaking, as far as numbers are concerned, the true wheat are very few in number. While there has been an unrecognized Great Company class all down the Gospel Age, today the proportion of Great Company among the consecrated is greater than ever before, even though more Bibles and study helps are available. At the present time, the proportion of Great Company to Little Flock is greater not only in numbers but also in percentage than in the previous six periods of the Church. The gospel is going to India, Africa, and Eastern Europe because so few sheaves of true wheat, true olives, and true grapes are left for harvesting. We are truly in a gleaning period, even though millions can be reached with the computer, for example. Many contacts are made, but the results are meager. Thus persecution can produce a greater percentage of the truly faithful than times of temporal prosperity. Of the Ephesus period, when the apostles were on the scene, it was said that no man dared to join himself to the believers who was not sincere in heart because the cost was so considerable (Acts 5:13). With all our affluence today enabling us to have witness efforts, the response is small.

**Deut. 25:1** If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

When a controversy occurred between two men, the judges determined who was guilty and who was innocent. The guilty one was given stripes, but the stripes were not to be inordinately rendered. This corporal punishment was for a misdemeanor or a felony; that is, the injury done to another was not an “eye for an eye” situation. The misdeed might be a property dispute or slander, for example. Great care was to be taken to ensure that righteous judgment was given.

**Comment:** This “controversy” was not in the nature of a grievous sin that required the death penalty. The fact that stripes were administered indicates an offense of a lesser nature. The principle in every case was to justify the righteous and to condemn the wicked.

**Reply:** Yes. For example, premeditated murder brought the death penalty. Nevertheless, in all cases—in judgments large and judgments small—righteous judgment was to be rendered. Circumstantial cases are difficult for a jury to decide, especially if the penalty is death.

**Deut. 25:2** And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

**Deut. 25:3** Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.

The maximum number of stripes was 40. However, the number given was proportionate to the seriousness of the misdeed. The guilty one was to lie down, and then the stripes were administered before the judge, who made the decision. Why was this procedure followed? With the stripes being given openly, the number could not be increased by a sadistic, malevolent person who would exceed his authority. The judgment was to be done immediately and according to sentence. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church punished “heretics” in darkness and in secret during the Holy(?) Inquisition.

**Q:** Today in this country, the accused has a right to face his accuser. Under the Mosaic Law, would we presume the victim was on hand to see the punishment meted out?

**A:** Yes. Both parties would be at the trial to start with, so in addition to the judge, the victim was automatically on hand to see the stripes administered. In addition, any public who attended the trial to see how the case was settled also saw the beating. It was good that the stripes were inflicted right away. When punishment is delayed for weeks, months, or even years, time tends to erase memory, and the sentence becomes more and more lenient.

**Comment:** Viewing the punishment acted as a deterrent to onlookers lest they commit a similar crime.

**Comment:** The Apostle Paul received 39 stripes on five different occasions (2 Cor. 11:24).

With regard to 40 stripes, “40” is a symbol of judgment. For example, Israel was tried in the Wilderness of Sinai for 40 years. The Jews made the rule of “40 less one,” or 39 stripes, lest they miscount and administer more than 40. For the beatings, they used knotted leather and not spikes like the Romans. Three leather strips were braided.

**Deut. 25:4** Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

The ox that trod out the corn was not to be muzzled. The animal was given sustenance and was allowed to eat while doing the work. A stingy person might muzzle the ox lest the animal eat too much, but that restriction would be an injustice. The ox was to be allowed to put his head down and munch a few grains as he went along, for he was worthy of his hire and should get food “wages.”

The Apostle Paul called attention to this principle with regard to the Christian. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:17,18).

When Paul traveled, he wanted his ministry to be effective. Although he inherited money, he learned a trade, as was customary, the trade being tent making. In foreign lands where he was not known, he made tents to support his needs. Thus he was not a burden to the brethren. However, he said there is nothing wrong with being supported in the gospel ministry *if* the person “treadeth out the corn,” that is, *if* he labors in preaching the gospel. Spongers are *not* to be supported.

Paul used the same principle with regard to women. Back there old folks’ homes did not exist. If possible, the aged and the infirm were to be cared for by their relatives. He advised young

widows to remarry, but old widows who had no means of support were to be cared for by the Church if they had served earlier (1 Tim. 5:5,8-11,14).

Paul also said, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1 Cor. 9:7-10). Thus principles can be extrapolated on a higher level from principles and incidents that are recorded in the Old Testament.

**Comment:** Proverbs 12:10 in the RSV reads, “A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.”

**Deut. 25:5** If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her.

**Deut. 25:6** And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

**Deut. 25:7** And if the man like not to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband’s brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother.

**Deut. 25:8** Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her;

**Deut. 25:9** Then shall his brother’s wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house.

**Deut. 25:10** And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead [husband] shall not marry without unto a stranger.” One reason for not marrying a stranger was to perpetuate the tribe that the wife had originally married within. To marry an Israelite from another tribe would diminish the first tribe.

**Comment:** Another reason for a widow to not marry someone from another tribe is that God allotted specific land to each tribe. Therefore, intermarriage between the tribes would remove the land inheritance from one tribe to another.

If a husband died and left his wife childless in young or middle age, the dead husband’s brother was to marry her. Although these verses do not say, probably the brother was not married. If he were married, the marriage requirement went down the line to the nearest unmarried kinsman. This law points to the sin of Onan with Tamar (Gen. 38:6-10). He spilled his seed instead of performing the duty of a husband for his deceased brother.

**Comment:** After taking the matter to the Lord, Moses told the four daughters of Zelophehad that they could have their father’s inheritance (Num. 27:1-11).

**Reply:** Since no son was born, that was the law of inheritance. God addressed that specific issue in their favor.

**Q:** Before Ruth, a Moabitess, married Boaz, the next of kin declined to marry her. Why did the nearest kinsman loose his shoe and give it to Boaz? Wasn't Ruth supposed to loose his shoe and spit in his face?

**A:** The Israelites were not carefully observing the Law at that time. Only in the days of Moses and possibly under Joshua was the Law enforced with particularity. During the Period of the Judges, every man did what was right in his own eyes. In other words, the Law was considered with different degrees of intensity as to how it should be carried out. Moreover, with the whole populace diminishing the customs, it was almost impossible for an individual to rectify the situation. Similarly, we sometimes find ourselves in a situation where we are a loner. We think God makes an allowance in that case, for one person cannot change the majority, although he can take a stand. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth took place a number of years after the Law was originally given.

“The firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.” It was on this basis that the next of kin declined to become Ruth's husband, for he saw that property would be involved and not just his name.

**Comment:** The practical aspect was that if a woman had no children, there was no one to take care of her in old age. Therefore, raising up seed was not just for the husband's name but also to provide a child who could care for her. It was like a form of Social Security.

**Reply:** Yes, that is true.

“Then shall his brother's wife come unto him [the nearest kinsman] in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and ... say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.” The woman was to take the shoe off the foot of the nearest kinsman who refused and spit in his face. The name of the refuser then became known in Israel as “The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.” In other words, there was a stigma against that brother and his household.

The one who refused to take Ruth gave as his reason that he would mar his inheritance because the son born would be considered not his but the son of the deceased. He wanted his own name on his son in the official register. Proof that the official name register in Israel was important is the fact that Matthew and Luke gave Jesus' genealogy through the father and the mother, and that genealogy has not been challenged as false. Part of the lineage was Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and David. Incidentally, it is interesting that Boaz did not lose his name for his son's lineage by marrying Ruth. There were other peculiarities too.

In this case, not the woman but Boaz brought the claim. Instead of Ruth taking the shoe off the nearest kinsman's foot who would not perform his obligation, Boaz took off the shoe. Thus, as time went on, customs were moderated or changed, but also this was a different situation. Boaz then had the right to marry Ruth; he performed his duty on behalf of Naomi, the mother-in-law. The principles followed by Boaz harmonize with the verses here in Deuteronomy 25, but there are differences.

**Q:** What is the symbology with the shoe being loosed?

**A:** When a shoe is on the foot, it is between the sole of the foot and the ground. Thus the shoe

is a foundation and a footing. When the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land, God said every place that the foot (with a shoe) touched, they would get; that is, God promised the Israelites victory in entering into a hostile environment in Canaan. The principle is like a person who, in becoming a Christian, exercises faith by stepping out into the unknown against “enemies.” To one who is considering consecration, God says, “If you take that step of faith, I will reward you proportionately.” Therefore, to have the shoe taken off the foot was a demotion.

There is an interesting antitype, for Boaz represents Jesus, and the kinsman is Adam. Boaz took off the kinsman’s shoe. Adam had the right to life and a family in his loins that would also have a right to life and an inheritance in the earth. If Adam had obeyed, the Garden of Eden would have increased and increased, but Adam lost the inheritance. Boaz’s procuring the shoe was like Jesus’ purchasing the right to life that Adam lost. Hence the shoe represents possession and inheritance. Loss of the shoe means a diminishing of the inheritance.

**Deut. 25:11** When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

**Deut. 25:12** Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.

In those days, there was a special sanctity with the part mentioned because it was a symbol of procreation, seed, and transmission of family rights. This principle shows up in Egypt too. Many things today are given a lustful, distorted recognition that originally was not the case. Adam and Eve were naked until sin entered. Now it would be improper to live as they did prior to sin because the world is under sin. With the original innocency of mind, nakedness was regarded in a detached way with no sinful connotation. Since the Fall, mankind has been born with a preference for evil that must be overcome and striven against.

Here a woman was trying to defend her husband who was being beaten. It does not say who was at fault, but her husband was getting the worst of the deal. By grabbing the private parts of the other man, she sinned and was to have her hand cut off. “Thine eye shall not pity her” signified that the penalty was to be carried out peremptorily.

**Q:** Since verses 11 and 12 pertain to the symbol of procreation, would the spiritual lesson have to do with somehow injuring a Christian in his ability to beget spiritual children?

**A:** Yes. The same reasoning applies along natural lines, where the woman does injury not only to the man involved but also to the unborn race in his loins, that is, to his possible posterity. Spiritually speaking, injury has been done all down the Gospel Age. A person can be wrongly stigmatized by gossip or a false witness so that his ministry is inhibited because of what someone said. The person’s ministry could even be affected for his entire life. Loose gossip is dangerous. The Apostle James said, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear [instruction], slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Many brethren have lost out on the high calling because of too much blabber. They may have been wonderful candidates with great potential, but because of careless remarks, they have lost their crown. Such individuals would not be fitted for immortality and an office of king and priest.

**Comment:** From a natural standpoint, the wife shamed and belittled her husband in the eyes of others. This lack of respect was considered so serious that her hand was cut off.

**Reply:** Yes, and the hand was directly involved, the principle being “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, and a life for a life.”

**Deut. 25:13** Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

**Deut. 25:14** Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

**Deut. 25:15** But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

**Deut. 25:16** For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

To manufacture unjust counterweights for a scale was deliberate cheating. The seller was not to use smaller, lighter weights, and the buyer, if he insisted on using his own weights, was not to use larger, heavier weights. Justice is the foundation of God's throne. Other methods of dishonesty are putting one's finger on the scale to register a false heavier weight or making the glass in a bottle thick so that the quantity or volume inside is diminished. All kinds of tricks are still done today. Incidentally, the Book of Ezekiel mentions different but just standards for the Kingdom, one reason being to show that the services of Ezekiel's Temple have not been performed in the past.

**Deut. 25:17** Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;

**Deut. 25:18** How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

**Deut. 25:19** Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Verses 17-19 allude to the time 40 years earlier when the Amalekites accosted the Israelites not long after the Exodus. When the Red Sea parted, the Israelites crossed with their wagons, animals, and gifts from the Egyptians. All the exhilaration, including the victory song, tired them so that they were "faint and weary." From heaven, God saw the Israelites struggling and then the cowardly way the Amalekites bit at their heels, that is, at the feeble Israelites at the back of the nation. Not until many years later were the Amalekites destroyed. Specifically, there were 40 years in the wilderness, 6 years for dividing the land, 450 years of the Period of the Judges, 40 years of Saul's reign, and about half of David's reign (or 20 years), for a total of 556 years before their destruction. There were to be no successors—all were exterminated. Of course the Amalekites will come forth from the grave, but those of mankind who develop an evil character may already be incorrigible when they are resuscitated. Such individuals will receive many stripes, or retribution, for their past wrong deeds.

The modern-day "Amalekites" are the Palestinian terrorists in Israel. For instance, they build fortifications or a nuclear facility behind or underneath hospitals or in a residential area. Another tactic is to have children throw stones, while men with guns are behind them. In other words, the children are used as fodder. Once this evil principle is cultivated, it is contagious and very difficult to eradicate. It becomes a part of the individuals involved. Arafat trained children from their youth to hate the Jews, and some people feel this training is justifiable, saying that the end justifies the means—even though many innocent people are victimized.

From another standpoint, there are spiritual "Amalekites." Jesus tells us that we can identify



some of them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16-20). There are individuals in the Truth movement who do nothing but criticize. In their discourses, they continually criticize the doctrine or the conduct of others. It is one thing to properly call attention to error and reveal it, but if brethren live a life of thorns and thistles, their life's work contains no fruitage, no benefits. These divisionists spread ruin in their path. Thus the Law has practical lessons, both natural and spiritual.

**Deut. 26:1** And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;

**Deut. 26:2** That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.

The custom that was observed is described in verses 1-11. When the Israelites came into the land God had promised, they were to take the first of all the fruits of the earth—the earlier “corn” (wheat, rye, and barley) and the later wine from the grapevines and oil from the olive trees—to “the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name.” The word “earth” seems to include all of these crops. These products were put in a basket ready for transport to the priest. At the time of Moses, the society was certainly agrarian.

**Q:** Was the place that God chose for His name eventually Jerusalem but Shiloh at first?

**A:** Yes. God would make known whatever place was propitious for the moment. Ultimately Jerusalem was the residing place, but earlier the Ark was at Shiloh for many years, at one house for a few years, and then at another house for three months—in addition to being captured by the Philistines. During the years of transition, it was a traveling Ark!

**Deut. 26:3** And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.

The individual had to take his basket to the priest and say, “I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.” What a quaint and touching custom!

**Deut. 26:4** And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.

The priest took the basket out of the individual's hand and set it down before the Brazen Altar. Later, at a convenient time, the Levites took the fruit for distribution first and stored the rest.

**Comment:** Abel's offering was acceptable because it was a blood sacrifice. God rejected Cain's vegetable offering.

**Reply:** Those sacrifices were put on the altar, whereas the corn, wine, and oil were gifts for the sustenance of the Levites and indirectly of the high priest and his family. In other words, the former were sacrifices *on* the altar, and the latter were sacrifices *before* the altar, being sacrificed but not burnt.

**Comment:** A Bible commentary says the following with regard to firstfruits: “The Israelites in Canaan, being God's tenants at will, were required to give Him tribute in the form of firstfruits and tithes.” The land was Jehovah's, and He gave it to the Israelites for a possession. In return, they gave Him a “payment” of the firstfruits and the tithes.

**Reply:** Yes. When the firstfruits and tithes were given to God, they either ended up with the Levites or were burned on the altar, going up in smoke as a sweet fragrance, depending on the circumstance.

**Comment:** These offerings were to be given from the heart and not by rote or as an obligation.

**Reply:** Although the firstfruit offerings were mandatory, they were to be given with the proper spirit. Supplementary offerings, such as thank offerings or requests for guidance, were freewill offerings.

It is astounding that Moses had all of this information in his head and could remember it. Large portions of Deuteronomy are a “thus saith the LORD,” but in addition, Moses ad-libbed with commentary of his own based on previous dealings with God and familiarity with the procedures He instituted. Moses received information and instruction at various times during the 40 years: when he was on Mount Sinai, when he wrote down information, when the Law was read every seven years, and when he rehearsed instructions to the Levites. An unusual child, he was born with the assets God wanted to have in a leader to teach His people. Moses was diligent, repetitive, and earnest in seeing that the Law was obeyed, but those who tried to obey failed because of the weakness of the flesh. While Moses was used at times to pronounce judgments of punishment, the Kingdom arrangement will be different, for every word will be backed up with power and authority by the greater Mediator, Jesus. Moses lacked the continuum of power to enforce and see that everything was done in order, but he certainly did the best he could under the circumstances. Reading Deuteronomy gives us insight into the character and personality of Moses, just as reading the Psalms gives us insight into the character and personality of David—and so forth with certain other personalities of the Old Testament. For example, we get a deep insight into the motivation of Ezra and Nehemiah. In contrast, little is known about the personal lives of many of the prophets, for instead of personal expressions of their admiration for God, there is more direct speaking from the Lord. For example, Isaiah was like a megaphone giving a “thus saith the LORD” again and again.

**Deut. 26:5** And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:

Verses 5-10a give the words each individual was to speak from memory before Jehovah when he brought the firstfruits of the land. To memorize this ditty would have required practice at home. Incidentally, the firstfruits of animals and children were also involved.

Jacob, the Israelites’ father, was “a Syrian [who was] ready to perish” during the famine. Years earlier he went to Syria to escape from the wrath of Esau, and there he served Laban. A proof text that Jacob was a Syrian is Genesis 25:20, “And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.” Rebekah, Jacob’s mother, was from Syria.

**Comment:** Hosea 12:12 is another helpful text: “And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.”

**Reply:** Yes, Laban was of that family and thus was a Syrian as well.

Lest we get high-minded, the Apostle Paul used an Old Testament picture to remind us about our former state, prior to consecration. When Abraham was called out of the land of the Chaldees, he was not circumcised. His circumcision came sometime later. Similarly, we were

drawn out of the world in a process that took time, and subsequently we consecrated. Jewish Christians felt that to be in God's grace, the Christian not only had to believe into Jesus Christ but also had to be circumcised. To scotch that idea, Paul reminded the Jews of Abraham, who was not circumcised when he was called of God to go to the land of Canaan. Moses' children are another example, for their circumcision took place later. Remembering that we were formerly of Adam, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, should keep us humble (Psa. 51:5).

**Comment:** The Israelites experienced a remarkable contrast. Jacob went down to Egypt because of the famine, but the Israelites left Egypt after 215 years, wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and then entered a land flowing with milk and honey. Their basket and store were full.

**Reply:** Yes, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, a land of milk and honey, their cornucopia was full.

**Comment:** Verses 5-10a were like a song of thanksgiving to show how God had led them.

The Israelites were few in number, being just 70 males, when they entered Egypt, but they multiplied miraculously. In 215 years, they became "a nation, great, mighty, and populous" with 2 million people.

**Deut. 26:6** And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:

**Deut. 26:7** And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression:

When the Israelites cried unto God in Egypt, He looked on their affliction, labor, and oppression—three different perspectives of the duress they were experiencing. Not only did they have to work long hours of hard labor, but they received stripes with a whip if they slowed down. In addition, they were oppressed in bondage as if in a prison with no way out. It is interesting how much information is contained in so few words of Scripture.

**Deut. 26:8** And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:

**Comment:** The person offering his firstfruits was to dramatically state, in crescendo form, this part of the Israelites' history. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt with (1) a mighty *hand*, (2) an outstretched *arm*, and (3) great and awesome *signs and wonders*.

As memorials of their responsibility to the Creator, the Jews were to put favorite Scriptures on the doorposts of their homes and on frontlets on their foreheads, and they were to wear bracelets. In one manner or another, these were aids to call to remembrance the promises and instructions of the Lord.

**Deut. 26:9** And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.

**Deut. 26:10** And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:

The memorized statement ended with, "And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me." Then the basket was set down before the altar, and

the individual worshipped Jehovah.

**Deut. 26:11** And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.

The Israelites were to be thankful and joyous. They were not to be morose or to bring their offerings out of a sense of duty-love. What God had done for them should have inspired them with peace, joy, happiness, and thankfulness in both mind and spirit. Although bringing the firstfruits was mandatory, the act was a reasonable service to their Creator. It was an expression of appreciation for what God had done for them, as well as a freewill offering.

**Comment:** Likewise, we are to thankfully and joyfully present our bodies a living sacrifice, a freewill offering, realizing that the sacrifice is a reasonable service made possible by the mercies of God (Rom. 12:1).

Three parties were involved: the Levite, the stranger, and the individual Israelite who was bringing the offering. All three were considered legitimate residents in the land, even if the stranger was sojourning, for he was dutifully complying with the regulations. Thus the “stranger” could be, among other things, a proselyte to the Jewish faith.

**Comment:** The right-hearted Jew wanted to praise God fervently with all his heart, mind, soul, and being.

**Deut. 26:12** When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;

**Deut. 26:13** Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them:

Verses 12-15 pertain to the subject of tithing, which contains such a multiplicity of detail that it cannot be covered or digested in one study. A tithe was a tenth (10 percent) of one’s increase. The increase could be along the lines of produce of the land or cattle. There was a close relationship between a tithe and a firstling. However, the tithe occurred every year, whereas the firstling (particularly a male) of a particular female animal was all that was required. In other words, the firstling was dedicated to God. A human firstling could be redeemed, for certainly a human being was not offered as a literal sacrifice on a literal altar. A human firstling was dedicated to the Lord, unless the individual was redeemed for a set price under the Law.

The tithe was every tenth animal, but what was extraordinary about the selection of the tenth animal is that it was done rhythmically. When the tenth animal passed under the rod, it was selected to be given to Jehovah whether it was a whole and perfect animal or a lame one.

However, if the party doing the tithing had an especially sensitive conscience and noticed that the tenth animal was lame, he could give another animal of the same kind that was whole and perfect. In other words, he could not replace or negate the lame animal, but he could give a second, additional animal.

What about the antitype of going under the rod for the selection of the tenth animal? The tithed animal or human that was dedicated to the Lord was ostensibly chosen randomly but

rhythmically. The Parable of the Dragnet illustrates the principle (Matt. 13:47-50). A net was cast into the sea to gather fish. When the net was full, it was drawn to shore, and the good fish were sorted into “vessels,” representing ecclesias. The time setting is the Second Presence. The Pastor sometimes likened the truth to a light or a magnet. The magnet is drawn through an assortment of material, and that which is of metallic quality adheres. The attraction of the truth draws a certain class of people from amidst humanity. When they feel a sense of obligation, they consecrate. Thus we can see the Lord’s method in casting the net into the sea and in using a magnet or light (knowledge or information) to attract some to the truth.

Of course in trying to analyze the tithing for an antitype, we have to be careful because we are entering into God’s methodology of calling people from the world. The point is that a mixed group results from the tithing. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, which started with the Parable of the Sower, is another good illustration. Jesus sowed good seed, and the devil sowed bad seed. The seed was sown to be harvested, but when some of the seed fell by the wayside, birds (the fallen angels) came along and devoured it.

This particular tithing of verse 12 was the “year of tithing.” Actually, tithing took place every year, so why did the “year of tithing” happen in the third year? Why did it not conflict with the tithing that took place every year?

**Comment:** The Hebrew states more correctly “the year of that tithe,” meaning the tithing in the third year.

**Reply:** In other words, this was a supplementary or additional tithing that was not to be confused with the tithing that took place every year. The annual tithe was taken to the Temple for the support of the Levites, who in turn had to pay a tithe on that tithe. Stated another way, when the Levites received a tithe from the people, they were to give a tithe of that amount. The year of tithing was to be given not only to the Levites but also to the fatherless (orphans), widows, and the poor (“strangers”) within Israel’s gates.

Still another standpoint has to be considered. The supplementary tithe was to be given the third year, but was that “third year” reckoned every third, sixth, ninth, twelfth, etc., year? No, the tithe occurred on the third and the sixth years of a seven-year cycle. When the next seven-year cycle started, the tithe was again given on the third and the sixth years. The reckoning becomes important in calculating the Jubilees. Many brilliant students of the Bible make a mistake in not recognizing seven-year cycles, and thus they start the Jubilee every 49 years, whereas it should start counting at the completion of the 50th year. Otherwise, without the seven seven-year cycles followed by the year of Jubilee, the Israelites would have the special tithe every third year—the third, sixth, ninth, twelfth, etc., years—and that arrangement would conflict with so many ordinances that the result would be complete confusion. For example, just from a practical standpoint, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Passover would conflict. Thus we can see how the Jubilees should be counted.

Also, a Scripture in Leviticus definitely states that the counting of the next Jubilee cycle should start at the end of the fiftieth year. Unfortunately, some confuse the chronology, and they try to harmonize it by using 49-year cycles as some, like Grattan Guinness, did in the past.

What is unusual about verses 13-15 is that the person who brought a tithe to the Temple had to give a little speech. How touching! He had to express his cognition of the tithe in a simplified fashion and then rehearse what God had done. The individual had to keep these words in memory. Similarly, Christians know the Lord’s Prayer and have it memorized.

**Comment:** The people were on the honor system. They professed that they had given to

orphans, widows, and the poor. If that was not the case, they incurred guilt.

**Reply:** In the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of this sin. Although the commandment was not mandatory, they made false statements, professing to have given their all, when in fact they had withheld money.

**Deut. 26:14** I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away aught thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

Why did the individual have to mention “mourning,” “unclean use,” and “the dead”? These three categories, or practices, were commonly employed in the heathen religions of surrounding nations. Anything given to the Lord as a tithe could not be eaten. With many of the offerings that were taken to the Temple, the offerer, as well as the priesthood, could partake of a portion, but that was not true of the tithe.

David ate of the shewbread in the Holy, but there were extenuating circumstances. Not only did he eat out of necessity, but with the shewbread being replaced every seven days, he ate of the replaced bread, the old bread.

There are New Testament applications for most of these ordinances. Some of the applications are literal; that is, they are along natural lines. Other applications are antitypical in the sense that they have a fulfillment on the higher plane of a principle. Thus there are both literal and spiritual applications.

**Deut. 26:15** Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

The Lord’s Prayer starts, “*Our Father, which art in heaven,*” and here the individual was to say to God, “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us.” The Christian, as well as the Jew, is to think outside of himself. Not only do we pray for ourself, but we pray for others too. Surely as Christians, we are dwelling in the “land that floweth with milk and honey” even in the present life. It is true that here is no rest for the old man, but if our mind is in the Holy, we have the milk and honey of the Word with its inner rest and hope.

**Comment:** God was basically telling the Israelites to claim His promises. Similarly, there are promises to the Christian of what He will do for one who is obedient. We should claim those promises.

**Deut. 26:16** This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

**Deut. 26:17** Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

**Deut. 26:18** And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

**Deut. 26:19** And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he

**hath spoken.**

God commanded the people to obey His statutes and judgments with all their heart and soul, and they “avouched,” or promised, to walk obediently in His ways. As a result, He avouched them to be His peculiar people predicated upon obedience. This back-and-forth community participation reminds us of the Psalms. In principle, God was saying, “If you take a step closer to me, I will take a step closer to you.” And when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, He said, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Josh. 1:3). This principle is also stated in the New Testament: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). Each step of obedience on our part is accompanied by the Lord’s stepping a little closer to us. Just as there are laws in nature, so there are spiritual laws that are very real.

**Q:** Is Exodus 19:5 an example of that principle? “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.”

**A:** Yes, that text is a good illustration of the reciprocity between both parties. When the covenant was originally given to Abraham, it was conditional, for he had to leave his country and go to the land God would show him. When Abraham left Haran after the death of his father and entered the Promised Land, the covenant became unconditional.

**Comment:** God even said, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, ... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10). God wanted the Israelites to obey so that He could pour out blessings upon them.

The effect of complying with the terms of verses 16-19 was that the Israelites would become a “peculiar people,” a valuable possession or treasure, in the sight of God. Even though they were given commandments, the obedience had to be freewill. Once the Israelites had made a commitment to serve the Lord, they were obligated to obey, yet God desired freewill, from-the-heart obedience. Those in the Gospel Age who make the high calling go beyond duty-love and render a sacrificial love, willingly suffering persecution and opposition and experiencing discomfiture through obedience. Who likes to be unpopular or to be shamed or disgraced? Who likes to suffer pain? However, if these sufferings are directly the result of obedience to the Lord, then afterwards we can sing (Heb. 12:11). Knowing that we have been faithful and obedient under duress brings satisfaction and joy. Such experiences are then stepping-stones instead of failures. We have ups and downs in the Christian walk.

**Comment:** The great temptation is to love mother, father, sister, brother, etc., more than Jesus and the Heavenly Father. We have to obey willingly if we want the Lord’s blessings.

**Comment:** God’s promise to make Israel “high above all nations ... in praise, and in name, and in honour” is a reminder of Isaiah 62:7, “Till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

**Reply:** Sometimes talks are given that we should live a life of sacrifice in the narrow way but not do so for the reward of the divine nature and immortality. However, the *hope* of the reward is a big factor in making our calling and election sure. The promises are important.

**Deut. 27:1** And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, **Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.**

Moses and the elders commanded the people to keep all the commandments of Jehovah as spoken “this day” by Moses. That “day” was very significant from different standpoints. We can certainly see the volume of his discourse—in fact, it is amazing how much Moses said with the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice, however, that he did not say, “Thus saith the LORD,” as though he were being mechanically moved, for he spoke, we believe, *by memory* of what God had previously told him. Therefore, in exhorting the people to obey God’s Law, Moses must have rehearsed the commandments with long, long explanations earlier. Now he was going through these explanations the second time. “This day” became significant because something else happened as well.

**Deut. 27:2** And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster:

**Deut. 27:3** And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

When the Israelites passed over the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land, they were to visibly write what Moses had said—all of the commandments—on “great stones.” Apparently, there were at least 12 stones, some of which were taken out of the midst of the river and moved to the shore. The Israelites were to write “all the words of this law.” The “plaster” was a form of whitewash that made the words easily readable. This writing was to be done right away as a “ticket” of permission to enter the land. Moses then went on and finished his discourse.

As Christians, we can see a higher level, namely, that God was laying a foundation for His higher plan or purpose. The Law was a foundation of instruction. Those who truly used it in the Jewish Age and onward reaped the benefit because it led them to Christ.

**Deut. 27:4** Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster.

**Q:** Were the stones situated on Mount Ebal?

**A:** We assume that eventually the stones were on Mount Ebal, for carrying these great stones to that location would have been a burden at the time. The Israelites waged a lot of battles and, therefore, did not get up to Mount Ebal for quite a while after entering the land. They crossed the Jordan River to the south near the Dead Sea, and Mount Ebal was farther north and inland near Shechem (Nablus).

We surmise that God has preserved the stones as a testimony. Of course they would have been covered and thus are not visible today and have not been discovered after several thousand years. The stones have been providentially preserved, just as the top stone of the Great Pyramid has been preserved in Egypt and will be unearthed in the Lord’s due time. Zechariah 4:7 implies the top stone will be found and set on the Great Pyramid at some future day.

**Comment:** Joshua 4:7 reads, “Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.”

**Reply:** Another set of stones, of a different nature, was put way up north on the far side of



Jordan. Words were spoken to those stones (not written on them). Since what is recorded by computer or on tape can be played back, we would not be surprised if, at some future date, the stones that were spoken to will be found and the people will be able to listen to the recording in the stones themselves.

When Jesus came into Jerusalem on his Triumphal Entry, he said, “If the children had not cried, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ the stones themselves would have cried out” (Luke 19:40 paraphrase). Thus God supplied a molecular mechanism in nature long before man invented recording machines. He had His own visual, audio, and written testimony, of which the Bible is one form. God has other purposes besides those that were circumstantial to Moses’ day, let alone the written record of His Word. All of this detail will be seen and heard in the future as it actually occurred. The veracity and the keeping power—the preservation for many centuries—of God’s Word will be clearly seen.

The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses’ swan song, his last sermon. In addition to giving such a lengthy sermon on “this day,” Moses died (Deut. 34:7). The reins were then turned over to Joshua.

**Q:** Were the stones of Joshua 4, which were placed in the middle of the Jordan River, a different set of stones from those mentioned here in Deuteronomy, which were set up on Mount Ebal at a later date?

**A:** Yes. God wanted to shame future generations that would have no faith in the Bible. From the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt through the wilderness wanderings, God has made arrangements for a visual showing of the events, so that all mouths will be shut. Those who have been most critical will be most ashamed. Even now when a person is shamed, he either goes out of the truth or confesses and humbles himself and accepts the experience. If that experience is seared into his memory, it can become a stepping-stone, a safeguard, for the future. Truth turns one either on or off.

**Deut. 27:5** And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

**Deut. 27:6** Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:

**Deut. 27:7** And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

**Deut. 27:8** And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.

Not lifting up any tool upon the stones that were used to construct an altar was a principle.

**Comment:** The heathen built their altars and temples out of hewn or polished stones, so the Lord wanted to make a distinction.

**Reply:** Yes. The temples in Egypt, which are thousands of years old, contain all kinds of paintings and colors of gods in various forms of action, whereas the true God is invisible, and no image was to be made to represent Him. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they worshipped God in a tent of skins. In contrast, the heathen worshipped in places of human ingenuity, where human skill and artisanship were employed to garnish the (supposedly) holy things. God wanted just plain truth without embellishments.

Verse 5 is a large picture of the principles involved in worshipping a God who is invisible. The only instructions we get, basically speaking, are in His Word. It will be seen in the future that the 144,000 made their calling and election sure and received the divine nature based on the written Word. They consecrated, faithfully devoted their lives, and obeyed God's Word, worshipping an invisible God. Their victory will show the power of God and the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit combined with the Word is POWERFUL. By the precious promises of God, one may become a partaker of the divine nature and of immortality. How miraculous! In God's chain of command, He is the Head, His Word is second, and Jesus Christ is third (Rev. 1:4,5).

Writing the Law on 12 "great stones" was a big project. The writing was to be done "very plainly." The main emphasis with the stones on Mount Ebal is that God was laying future testimonials of the accuracy and the authenticity of His Word. The lesson for us is the writing on the tablets of our heart, the engraving work that is being done for the new creature. Both natural and spiritual truths are there, and sometimes a combination of the two. Making our calling and election sure should be our primary emphasis. If possible, and by God's grace, we want our hearts to be made in the image of Christ, remembering that obedience is better than sacrifice.

**Deut. 27:9** And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

**Deut. 27:10** Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Verse 9 is stated in an unusual manner. "This day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God." God had taken the Israelites into His confidentiality, into His "inner circle." He had been counseling them, giving them final instruction before they entered the Promised Land. As the mediator and "coach," Moses told God's instructions to the people, telling them what to keep in mind. Then Moses would send them off, for he would die that day. As God's people, they were to keep all of the instructions in remembrance as they went forth on a mission into the new land. Moses would end with a nice blessing. How wonderfully God used him, yet he was not even a member of the Little Flock! God has His own purposes, which are based not on human merit but on His grace, on faith in and obedience to His Word, and on His promises. The humble, the thirsty, the hungry ones get the chief blessing.

**Deut. 27:11** And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

**Deut. 27:12** These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:

**Deut. 27:13** And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, representatives of six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin), and representatives of the other six tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal for the curses (Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali). The people were down below.

**Comment:** A valley was in between the two mountains, forming a natural auditorium. The tribes called back and forth.

As we will see, God delineated through the Levites, with much detail, the miseries and the woes that would come upon the nation of Israel if they did not hearken to His Word. The

judgments of 606 BC and AD 69-70 were remarkable historical fulfillments of the results of disobedience. Certain portions of the miseries and the woes will have a prophetic application in the near future as the final chapter of the Gospel Age, that is, before Israel's great deliverance when the forces of Gog and Magog come down.

**Deut. 27:14** And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

What is outstanding about the manner in which the curses were spoken and presented? After each curse, all of the people answered, "Amen," signifying that they agreed with what was said and that they would obey. In addition, this particular portion of curses (verses 15-26) is definitive and mathematical, for 12 were given, corresponding to the 12 tribes. "And the Levites [plural] shall speak .... with a loud voice [singular]."

**Comment:** The Levites spoke in unison so that their voices would project for all of the Israelites to hear the curses.

**Reply:** The Levites made these announcements in unison so that their voices would be loud enough. Some of the Levites stood on the slope of Mount Gerizim and others stood on the slope of Mount Ebal. Generally speaking, the people were down in the valley in between the two mountains. Exceptions were the representatives of the 12 tribes, certain selected individuals, who stood on Ebal and Gerizim with the Levites. When the Levites spoke, the people below heard blessings on one side and a response of curses on the other side. The curses were predicated upon whether they obeyed or disobeyed.

Each blessing was followed by an "Amen," and after each curse came another "Amen" ("So be it"), showing the people were in agreement. We are reminded of the setting at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given. The nation responded, "All the words which the LORD hath said will we do" (Exod. 24:3). They agreed to obey the Decalogue as well as the ceremonial features of the Law. In this spectacular fashion, the nation was introduced to their journeying in the wilderness. The first feature of the Law took effect on the night of the Passover, when the Israelites were still in Egypt, but the more official or ceremonial aspect, when the nation was all together instead of being in separate homes, occurred at Mount Sinai. At the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses died, and Joshua took over as the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan River.

Thus at both the beginning and the ending of their wilderness journeying, the nation heard the requirements of the Law. Of the generation of Israelites who heard the Law at Mount Sinai, all died except, according to the official count, Joshua and Caleb. The older generation all said, "Amen," but they perished in the wilderness. The younger (or new) generation, the survivors, were now about to enter the Promised Land, and they also said, "Amen." In obedience, was this generation much different from their parents? While Joshua was alive, the people were somewhat kept in line but not to the same degree as under Moses. For example, the Israelites experienced ten plagues during the 40 years in the wilderness, which corresponded to the ten plagues that came on the Egyptians prior to the Exodus. We can see the exactness of God's plan—the details were thought out in advance of how He would deal with His people.

**Q:** With the Levites speaking in unison, wouldn't someone have had to keep the cadence or the rhythm because if they did not speak each word at exactly the same time, the message would be garbled?

**A:** They had to speak in unison with a loud voice so that the people could hear. When God makes certain revelations, they are sufficiently clear so that the hearers are responsible to obey.

God spoke plainly and clearly enough for them (and us) to understand the fundamentals of His Word.

**Deut. 27:15** Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

The prohibition against making a graven image reminds us of the First Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod. 20:4). The curses were enlargements of the Ten Commandments. In fact, to a certain extent, they were a combination of the Decalogue and the ceremonial Law, the principles being put together in this convenient form.

**Q:** Why was a “secret place” emphasized?

**A:** Some of the Israelites secretly possessed a graven image. The people were responsible for what was done privately as well as publicly. For example, Rachel hid images by sitting on them (Gen. 31:34). Thus one who possessed an idol privately was not shielded from responsibility. As a reminder of their responsibility, the people were to have God’s Word on the lintels of their homes, on the walls, on their foreheads, and even on their garments. Christians are not under the Law, but they are under the *principles of obedience* to God’s instructions.

**Comment:** As read earlier, “If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; ... Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him” (Deut. 13:6,8).

**Reply:** Disobedience regarding false gods started in the home back there. With us, it starts secretly in the mind or in the heart and eventually manifests itself in deeds of the flesh. Disobedience can be discerned, at least to a limited extent, by its “fruits” (Matt. 7:20).

**Comment:** In regard to having a secret idol in the heart, the idol is usually something the Christian desires that may or may not be altogether wrong, but it clashes with his consecration. Therefore, the idol should be cut off immediately.

**Reply:** An idol is not necessarily something sinful. For example, it could be spending consecrated time on music that leads away from hearkening to the Lord’s Word. Music has its place as hymns but not as concerts, operas, marching songs, etc. These areas are a misuse of consecrated time.

**Comment:** We are not able to think of God’s Word when we are in those places. They are not the worst environment, but neither are they the best.

**Comment:** With regard to the expression “the work of the hands of the craftsman,” the idols of antiquity were usually very beautiful. And that is also true of various trivia in the world created by man. If we harbor a love and a desire for these things in our heart, we are actually cultivating something that is detestable to God.

**Reply:** Yes. However, observing the works of nature helps us to appreciate God’s mercy. For example, the rain falls on the just and the unjust—on everyone. We can spend profitable time on things God has made, but the composition of men is another matter. The images were

made *by man*, yet man worshipped them. What honors God is honorable; for instance, Handel's *Messiah* is inspiring, whereas much of the other music is not profitable for the new creature. Idle time can be spent on things that *praise God* in some way or manner.

**Deut. 27:16** Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

“Setteth light” means “esteems lightly” or “dishonors.” Basically speaking, “Cursed is he that is a disobedient child.” Of course all children are disobedient at times and then are spanked or given another form of correction for wrong behavior. Therefore, the esteeming lightly of father or mother would be habitual rather than an isolated incident, unless that incident was very pronounced.

**Comment:** The curses seem to be a summation of commands that were given earlier in greater detail in Deuteronomy. For instance, verse 16 is a summation of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, “If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”

**Reply:** Yes, that is true for the most part. However, when we examine Deuteronomy closely, we see that Moses added a few details that were not given earlier in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

Verse 16 is another way of saying, “You should honor your father and your mother.” Sometimes our understanding is helped by reversing a negative statement into a positive statement, or vice versa.

**Comment:** The commandment at Mount Sinai was, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exod. 20:12). Dishonoring parents brought the penalty of being stoned to death, which shortened life.

**Reply:** Deuteronomy 5:16 was worded similarly: “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” The word “prolonged” was carefully selected because Moses was speaking to a people who were already condemned under Adam, let alone under the Law. Fallen man cannot prolong life indefinitely by obeying these commandments, but he can extend life to a certain extent.

**Comment:** There seem to be several reasons for this commandment about honoring father and mother. If the offspring followed the instructions of their parents, it helped them stay closer to the Lord and the same religion. And probably more important, by having this concept of honoring father and mother, they would be more apt to honor God and ultimately perceive Him as their Heavenly Father.

**Reply:** It is true that the Bible favors family life. Normally speaking, anything divisive destroys family life. However, as Christians, we are in a little different category than the Jews under the Law. We have to be careful that our love for parents is less than our love for Jesus. To be obedient to God, one sometimes has to break that relationship. We should try to harmonize all Scripture. To get a balanced view, we have to be as familiar as possible with all of God's Word.

Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established.

**Deut. 27:17** Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Moving a neighbor's landmark was very easy to do in Old Testament times and thus was a temptation. Under the Law, land allotments were given according to the tribes, and within a tribe, land allotments were given according to family. The allotments at the time of Joshua may have been predicated upon the size of the family and the number of children.

**Comment:** Sometimes only rocks marked property boundaries, so it was easy for a neighbor to move the rocks.

**Reply:** God took the Israelites into the wilderness to prove them, that is, to see what they would do under various circumstances. That same principle applied throughout Israel's history. When no one was looking, some pushed the "landmark" a couple of feet to their advantage. Several days later, they did the same thing again, etc. Before long one could double his property in a surreptitious manner by degrees.

Verse 17 was an example of how to love one's neighbor. To move the landmark meant the individual loved *himself*. It is helpful for the Christian to study the Law, not with the intent that he is under the Law but to see what God's thinking is. It is *God's Law*; *He* made it. Christians are under a different arrangement, for they are under the robe of Christ's righteousness, and it is possible for them to get life by obedience to the Sarah Covenant. Life was impossible for fallen man under the Law Covenant.

How did fallen man get life in Old Testament times? It was obtained by obedience to the Abrahamic Covenant, which preceded the Law. By obeying the promise to Abraham, the Ancient Worthies earned the right to life with a perfect heart intent. They will come forth from the tomb with a perfect human organism. The rest of fallen mankind will be raised somewhat with the condition they had in the present life. As they obey, they will be rewarded with better health and the ability to perform under the New Covenant arrangement of the next age.

**Q:** In the context of modern-day Israel and the West Bank, will curses come on those who make land concessions to the Palestinians?

**A:** That is an interesting observation, and it seems to be a proper analogy in principle. To compromise by giving land for peace—land that belongs to Israel—is moving a "landmark" in principle.

**Comment:** Proverbs 23:10 adds one more aspect: "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." The Jews were not to take advantage of orphans.

**Deut. 27:18** Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.

In the pronouncement of these curses, we see a certain structure, namely, the verification of the people in saying "Amen." The Levites pronounced the curse and then added in each case, "And all the people shall say." At that point, the people responded with a chorus of "Amen."

**Comment:** Having audience feedback was a good reinforcement tool. The Roman Catholic Church has adopted the practice of responsive readings.

**Reply:** Yes, that church system has adopted many of the ceremonial rituals of the Old Testament with additives and innovations because of the revenues generated by the tithing system. Improperly based on the clothing of the Levitical priesthood, the distinctive robes and garments of the clergy set them off from the laity. Of course that church system does not see the spiritual symbolic significance of why God used the various colored robes and ceremonies. The Roman Catholic hierarchy likes the outward performance.

**Deut. 27:19** Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Deut. 27:20** Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Verses 20-23 deal with sexual infractions and illegitimate relationships, which have been a problem in practically all societies up to the present time.

**Deut. 27:21** Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Deut. 27:22** Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Deut. 27:23** Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Moses was careful to make the distinction between a "mother-in-law" and a "father's wife" (verses 20 and 23) so that one could not find an excuse or an exception for sin. The commandments take into consideration the foibles of human nature, the flesh. A text in the New Testament comes to mind, namely, 1 Corinthians 5:1, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife." There the term "father's wife" probably referred to a stepmother or a mother-in-law. In the church at Corinth, that egregious sin was committed by a far more enlightened people than those living in the days of Moses. And such sins are still committed today, even among professing Christians, including homosexuality and remarriage without scriptural grounds.

If we study just the New Testament, a lot of obvious wrongs can be overlooked. If the sins required a death sentence in the Old Testament, then certainly the Christian should know those sins are strictly forbidden. The principles of the Old Testament need to be thoroughly studied. To study just the works of the Pastor and consider them to be equivalent to reading the Bible is another problem, for he quoted only about one third of the Bible. The point is that we have to be familiar with every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God in both the Old and the New Testament (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). We need to study the teachings of all whom God has appointed as teachers in Holy Writ. The Israelites should have seen that the major and minor prophets were God's spokespersons because of the providential events that occurred in their lives. If we had lived back there, the prophets would have stood out because of their exemplary lives. All of the Israelites knew about Jeremiah, for example, so each person was either for or against him. Thus there should be the recognition of every word that comes out of the mouth of not only God, Jesus, and the apostles but also God's providential human exponents of that Word. When faithful individuals spoke under the power of the Spirit in the Old Testament, it was Almighty God speaking through them. *Every word was His word; what they said was like speaking ex cathedra, as it were.*

**Comment:** Even prior to the giving of the Law Covenant, when Reuben lay with his father's concubine, he lost his standing as the firstborn (Gen. 35:22; 49:3,4).

**Reply:** And so did the next two, Simeon and Levi, for their acts of cruelty (Gen. 49:5-7).

The infractions in this twenty-seventh chapter are gross immoralities. Many of them pertain to sexual sins, showing how pronounced the animal desires of the flesh are. Such sins are one of the Adversary's tools that have not waxed old. Satan has had to discard certain other tools, but sexual immorality is just as convenient for him to use today as it ever was.

**Deut. 27:24** Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Deut. 27:25** Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Deut. 27:26** Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Comment:** Verse 26 shows our responsibility. If we want to come into covenant relationship with the Lord, we cannot pick and choose what we want to obey. We must live by the whole Word of God. We must confirm all of God's instructions.

**Comment:** Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [them]. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-20). To fail to abide by the whole Word of God would be a sin of omission.

**Reply:** However, it should be kept in mind that there are gradations of sin. For instance, a blatant lie is not in the same category as a white lie. And there are different degrees of stealing, some being of a less significant nature that would not require the death penalty. Nevertheless, all sin is serious, and we should be on guard, for slight infractions can lead to more serious infractions. If continued in, they can lead to the point of no return in committing the abominable act. Stripes, punishments, are given in proportion to the sin.

If one falls into grievous sin requiring disfellowship, he can still be recovered if there is proper repentance. For example, the fornicator of 1 Corinthians 5 sorrowed to such a degree that he was considering suicide. Paul advised the Corinthians to receive him back into their fellowship because he had manifested godly sorrow and repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8). However, although those who have committed grievous sin and subsequently repented are to be forgiven and welcomed back into God's family, they should not be elected as elders. God will judge whether we make our calling and election sure by how we interpret and follow *His* principles.

The 12 pronouncements of verses 15-26 cover subjects and relationships that people of many other nations realize are vulgar and improper because of the conscience God has given man. Formulating the curses in this orderly fashion helps to score the memory with a cognizance of these abominations, which conscience should tell us are wrong. Keeping the pronouncements fresh in the mind assists us in everyday conduct. If we are careless or negligent in having our conscience guided by them, they will be easily forgotten. Habitually committing the infractions



begins to undercut the importance of the fundamental moral standard of a whole people. God wanted the Jews (and He wants us) not only to write them on walls but to sing hymns and to repeat them. Our minds are like sieves that constantly need reminders and filling.

**Q:** In review, what were the mechanics between (1) the six representatives of the six tribes standing on Mount Gerizim to bless the people and the six representatives of the other six tribes standing on Mount Ebal to curse (verses 12 and 13) and (2) the Levites who pronounced the curses in unison with a loud voice (verse 14)?

**A:** Some of the Levites stood on the slope of Mount Gerizim to announce the blessings in unison. Also on Mount Gerizim was a representative from each of six tribes. Other Levites stood on the slope of Mount Ebal to pronounce the curses in unison. A representative from each of the other six tribes likewise stood on Mount Ebal. The two groups on each mountain shouted back and forth. Meanwhile, the people were in the valley below, between the two mountains, ready to cry out “Amen” when prompted for each blessing and each curse.

**Deut. 28:1** And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

**Deut. 28:2** And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

The blessings were about to be pronounced. God was saying through Moses, “If you hearken to my word and obey, you will disannul the curses, and the blessings will overtake you.” Stated another way, the Israelites would be overcome by God’s love and goodness, and the magnetism of the flesh would begin to diminish. They would be blessed in proportion to their hearkening to God’s voice. The same principle applies with us. Because we are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, the flesh needs to be overcome. By God’s mercy, we have been adopted into His family through Christ.

The blessings for obedience have a counterpart with the Christian. Generally speaking, they are not along natural lines, as they were for the obedient Jew, although there can be material blessings to a certain extent. Nevertheless, we are promised only bread and water. Any tribulation that God permits is either (1) correction or punishment for disobedience or (2) discipline and encouragement for the progress already made in the narrow way.

**Comment:** If the Israelites hearkened diligently and obeyed the commandments, God promised to set them “on high above all nations of the earth”; that is, they would be his “peculiar treasure” (Exod. 19:5; Psa. 135:4). The same principle applies to spiritual Israel.

**Reply:** Yes. “Peculiar” in that sense means “rare,” “valuable,” and “unique.”

**Deut. 28:3** Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

The person “in the city” usually did not grow crops but was a shopkeeper or had some other profession. The person “in the field” followed agrarian pursuits, growing crops and/or raising livestock. If the Israelites were obedient, God would bless the fruit of their labors whether in the city or in the field.

**Comment:** The blessings on natural Israel were temporal and earthly, whereas our blessings are heavenly and spiritual.

**Comment:** Although not an Israelite, Rahab was blessed for her faith and obedience, yet the city of Jericho fell. Lot was selectively removed from Sodom before its destruction.

**Deut. 28:4** Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

The Israelites' seed would be blessed—the fruit of their bodies, the fruit of their land, and the fruit of their flocks. There is also a spiritual agriculture and a spiritual seed in preaching the Word, for God's Word begets spiritual children. Thus all of these blessings have both material and spiritual applications.

**Comment:** Jacob was blessed with flocks of sheep and goats, even though Laban tried to cheat him.

**Comment:** The blessings really go back to Abraham, for he was promised that his seed would be blessed and multiplied as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the seashore.

**Reply:** Yes, this principle operated even before the Mosaic Law was given. For instance, during the 215 years the Israelites were in Egypt, the nation increased from 70 males to over 2 million people at the time of the Exodus. In fact, they increased so rapidly that Pharaoh was alarmed and felt the Egyptians had to stop the multiplying.

**Deut. 28:5** Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

A further blessing for obedience would be bountiful harvests as well as daily provisions. Spiritually speaking, faith and obedience bring good results in both doctrine and character. If we are not blessed in the present life, then we are laying up treasures in heaven, which is more important. On the one hand, some Christians remain poor all their life but will make their calling and election sure. On the other hand, Christians who have more of this world's goods for various reasons may not make the Little Flock. To obey is better than sacrifice is the principle. Every step of obedience brings a greater entrance into the Promised Land. As Moses said to the Israelites on behalf of God, "For every step you take, God will give you the ground under your foot." Every step of obedience brings a compensatory reward *either seen or unseen*.

**Deut. 28:6** Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

What do the blessings when "coming in" and the blessings when "going out" signify?

**Comment:** There would be blessings when the individual came home and also when he went out to work in the field.

**Reply:** Yes, that seems to be the case. God dealt with the nation as a whole, and the curses did not really set in until after Joshua. The Book of Joshua pertains to the years of his leadership, during which the nation settled down in the new terrain or abode. Problems began to occur afterward, so that during the Period of the Judges, the blessings and curses came about. When the *majority* of the nation was disobedient, the blessings of coming in and going out applied only to the faithful few. This was especially true in the punishment periods of captivity.

**Comment:** Psalm 121:8 reads, "The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." A real protection was promised for obedience.

**Reply:** The blessings included protection but encompassed other areas as well. For example,

the Scriptures say there is nothing worse than dwelling in a home with a contentious and angry woman (Prov. 21:19; 27:15). With such a situation being purgatorial, the husband would get more peace outside the home. The ideal situation is when both inside and outside of the home, the blessings are in effect during one's waking hours. That condition would be visible to all.

**Comment:** In the spiritual counterpart, our guardian angels watch over us at all times, whether we are awake or asleep, whether we are in the house or out of the house.

**Reply:** The blessings include protection but are manifested in other ways too. For example, the implication with natural Israel was fruitful crops and productive fields. In the home, the Israelites were fruitful in procreation.

**Deut. 28:7** The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

Verse 7 was a powerful blessing—to fight an enemy and be that victorious!

**Q:** Does the expression “smitten before thy face” indicate that the Israelites would not have to lift a finger?

**A:** Instances are recorded in Scripture where that kind of victory did take place. The battle fatalities of the enemy were usually given but not those of Israel. We assume that in many cases, Israel suffered some fatalities, but because of partial obedience, they were small in number compared to those of the enemy. When really obedient, the Israelites did not have to exert any effort for the victory. In other battles, Jehovah allowed a temporary defeat so that the nation would learn lessons. When the Israelites repented, the next battle was a victory. Thus the result of a battle was based not only on obedience but also on the *degree* of obedience.

**Comment:** Seeing the enemy come out one way and flee seven ways is a good visual picture. The enemy came in as a strong organized unit but ran in all different directions in defeat.

**Reply:** Yes, the enemy approached in a concentrated fashion for the attack, but the result was like a sudden explosion in dispersal. The enemy fled in panic, getting in each other's way and slaying and maiming one another in their confusion.

**Deut. 28:8** The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

**Comment:** The people lived an agrarian lifestyle in those days. The blessing for obedience that their storehouses would be full was a comfort. Not only would they always have something to eat, but also they would be prosperous.

**Reply:** In addition, when they were victorious in warfare, they usually plundered the goods of the enemy, taking a spoil.

“The LORD ... shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” That land “of milk and honey” was very fruitful in the past (Lev. 20:24). An evidence of the fruitfulness is the huge number of animals that were sacrificed at times in the Israelites' history.

**Comment:** On a particular Passover under King Hezekiah, thousands of animals were given for sacrifice: 2,000 bullocks and 17,000 sheep (2 Chron. 30:24).

**Deut. 28:9** The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.

**Deut. 28:10** And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.

We are living at a unique time. For 17 centuries, Christians made their calling and election sure without knowing that one of God's names is Jehovah. For most of that time, there were no printing presses, and all written material was done by hand. The terms "Lord God," "Mighty One," and "Holy One of Israel" were used more often than the Hebrew pronunciation. The point is not to make the name Jehovah a cardinal point by saying one cannot please God without always calling him by that name. We call Him "Father," and Jesus said that when we pray to God, we should address Him as "Our Father" (Matt. 6:9). Therefore, we have to be careful not to set up guidelines that would be injurious to our conscience.

**Deut. 28:11** And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

For obedience, the Israelites would abound in goods, children, flocks, and produce. Spiritually speaking, the same applies to Christians. In mind and spirit, we are dwelling in the Promised Land; that is our hope. Even now we get a foretaste of what is yet to come if we are faithful. Meanwhile, we are blessed along spiritual lines and even with shelter and food. If we obey God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, He will open the heavens to us and pour out a blessing. When we consecrate, we get a large spiritual family, and even internationally in more recent years because of advances in travel.

**Deut. 28:12** The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

The variety and abundance of blessings promised to natural Israel for obedience are almost unbelievable. Verse 12 mentions rain in season and money so that the Israelites would be lenders and not borrowers.

**Deut. 28:13** And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:

"The LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail." Isaiah 9:13-16 tells what happened because of Israel's disobedience: "For the people [of Israel] turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." When Israel was disobedient, a cleansing or purging occurred with the next generation. For example, three different captivities took place at the hand of the Babylonians during the latter end of the Period of the Kings. The number of Jews taken into captivity was small: 3,023 in the 7th year, 832 in the 18th year, and 745 in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar, for a total of only 4,600 (Jer. 52:28-30). However, the genes came through these survivors—not necessarily with every individual but through a general screening. In other words, God providentially spared most of these individuals in a particular sense. In that way, the genes of the obedient came through, rather than of the disobedient.

“Thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath.” In spite of all the disobedience of natural Israel under the Law, some of these blessings are in their genes. For example, the Jews excel in science, and because of their scientific skills, they are leaders in agriculture. A disproportionate number of Nobel Prize winners are Jewish. They are talented as a people, so we can imagine what they would have accomplished had they been obedient.

**Deut. 28:14** And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

**Deut. 28:15** But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

**Deut. 28:16** Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.

**Deut. 28:17** Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store.

**Deut. 28:18** Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

**Deut. 28:19** Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

In reading these curses for disobedience, we notice that they are the opposites of the blessings (compare verses 3-6).

**Comment:** The first 14 verses of chapter 28 pertain to blessings for obedience, and the remaining 54 verses deal with curses for disobedience. Considerably more attention was given to the results of disobedience.

**Reply:** In fact, the curses are so numerous and nebulous that they cannot all be numbered. For instance, is one verse talking about three or more curses or just one curse viewed from three different perspectives?

**Comment:** The world has the philosophy that people are more motivated by being afraid of something negative than by being encouraged by something positive. The Scriptures seem to bear out this thinking. Pertaining to the natural man, more of the Ten Commandments are “Thou shalt not” than “Thou shalt.” To the contrary, the new creature is motivated by the promises of God, the positive things.

**Reply:** Yes, we have often thought of the Ten Commandments from that standpoint. In summarizing the Law, Jesus reduced the Ten Commandments to two: (1) “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (2) “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And he added, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).

**Comment:** The Christian is told to “grieve not the holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30). In proportion to obedience or disobedience, one prospers or declines spiritually.

**Reply:** Yes, to obey is better than sacrifice. We need this type of repetition of blessings and curses. The goodness God has promised to those who faithfully serve Him is unimaginable, yet how few are hearkening!

**Deut. 28:20** The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

Before proceeding, we will have a little review. Moses continued to give instructions to the Israelites. When they entered the Promised Land, there was to be a festival in which the blessings of God's Word for the obedient would be pronounced by the Levites on Mount Gerizim and the cursings for the disobedient on Mount Ebal. The people were situated in the valley below. The princes of six tribes were on the side slopes of Mount Gerizim, and the princes of the other six tribes were on the side slopes of Mount Ebal. The Levites first did the instructing in a loud voice. Then the princes would shout, "Let all the people say," and the people down below would respond in unison "Amen."

On the whole, the history of Israel is one of disobedience, especially during the 513-year Period of the Kings. Out of the long list of kings, very few were commended. During the 450-year Period of the Judges, there were alternating cycles of disobedience, temporary captivity as punishment leading to repentance and obedience, and deliverance at the hand of a judge raised up by the Lord. The judge not only restored the Israelites to power but also delivered them morally and spiritually. After a while, the people retrogressed again. And thus it has been with the nominal people of God—with both natural Israel prior to Christ and spiritual Israel after Christ. The Gospel Age began with the Ephesus period of the Church, meaning "desirable," but contamination followed with the rise of Papacy. Truly the events of the Old Testament were examples and admonitions for the Christian (1 Cor. 10:11).

**Deut. 28:21** The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.

**Deut. 28:22** The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

These warnings of punishments for disobedience should have been sobering to the Israelites. "The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land.... The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, ... fever, ... inflammation, ... extreme burning, ... the sword, ... blasting, and ... mildew ... until thou perish." The curses for disobedience were repeated. The repetition was not vain but was important in order to score the thoughts into the Israelites' memories—at least for a little while.

**Comment:** The blessings and the curses were personal to the individual and collective on the nation, the land, and activities.

**Reply:** Yes, God rewarded with a prolonging of days those individuals who tried to obey Him; He favored them from a natural standpoint. Of course as Christians, we have to interpret the blessings and cursings as spiritual lessons for the new creature. Spiritual blight or favor comes on us depending on our level of obedience or disobedience.

**Q:** What is a "consumption"?

**A:** We cannot answer that question with specificity. However, tuberculosis, a disease of the lungs, is called "consumption." A consumption could also be a fever or an inflammation, so it would be an infection or disease of one form or another. In times past, tuberculosis was considered fatal, for there were few survivors.

**Comment:** A Bible dictionary states that even though pulmonary consumption occurred frequently in Palestine, “consumption” was likely to be the much more common condition of wasting and emaciation from prolonged or often recurring attacks of malaria fever.

**Deut. 28:23** And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.

As brass is unyielding, so no rain would come forth from the heavens. Brass shines, and the shining indicated a hot, dry desert-like situation. From the lack of rain, the earth would be rock-hard like iron.

**Deut. 28:24** The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

Verse 24, a form of sarcasm, was a play on words. The wind would carry the sand of the desert long distances so that the “rain,” instead of being water, would consist of dry powder and sand overflowing the land.

**Comment:** The sirocco, a dry, hot wind, can last for days and be destructive.

**Deut. 28:25** The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

Verse 25 has the hint of a prophetic aspect. Not only would the Israelites’ being smitten by enemies and fleeing seven ways be one of the curses, but the more profound significance would be the Diaspora of AD 70, when the Jews were dispersed in all directions for more than 1,800 years. Similarly, Leviticus 26 contains a hint of the Gospel Age, but the application of the seven times is primarily to Gentiles Times.

In broad terms, the Jews have gone through purgatorial experiences during the Gospel Age that were more along the line of chastisements, whereas Christians have been receiving favorable discipline. Both Jews and Christians have been persecuted, but persecutions faithfully received by the *spiritual* class—sufferings endured for righteousness’ sake—lead to a great reward. The persecution of the Jews has been the result of their statement “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). Today we live in a period of time when the Jews are being returned to favor. Since 1917 their discipline has been different, for it will eventually lead to their waking up. They are trying to lift *themselves* up by their *own* bootstraps, as even their rabbis teach them to do, but that thinking will lead to a crescendo when they call on God with all their heart, soul, and strength for deliverance. Since 1917 the Jews have been, and are being, slowly instructed. Ezekiel 37 pictures the bones coming together and sinews and flesh forming on the bones. Finally, yet future, breath will enter, and the bones shall *live*.

We should not try to find spiritual applications and pictures in each of the blessings and cursings. The rain and the sunshine of God’s favor are predicated upon obedience. Rather than our going into all kinds of pictures, these verses are just simple character instruction and common-sense talking. The Apostle Paul stated this principle, “Doth not even nature itself teach you...?” (1 Cor. 11:14). The primary lesson is that obedience brings blessings and disobedience brings penalties.

**Deut. 28:26** And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

**Comment:** Psalm 79:1,2 reads, “O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.”

**Reply:** Yes, that text refers to an instance when the cursing of verse 26 occurred. Several such occasions are recorded in the Old Testament, although not every account mentions the carcasses being food for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth. When thousands of fatalities occurred, the defeated Israelites did not have time to give the bodies a decent burial before the fowls and the beasts fed on them. No man could “fray” (frighten or chase) them away. As a general spiritual lesson for the Christian, the cursing indicates that those who are disobedient go into Second Death and become the subject of the Destroyer, Satan.

Again we will state that the *principles* of disobedience are shown. Thus verse 26 is not talking about the specific instance of Armageddon. We are not supposed to fasten these verses to specific pictures in the Old Testament, for other Scriptures go into great detail and depth. We are reading the cursings for *general instructional* value—to see what will happen to *us* if we are disobedient.

**Deut. 28:27** The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

“The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, ... emerods, ... the scab, and ... the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.” These are diseases of the skin. There was a great danger of contracting the “botch” from the Nile River at certain periods of the year. Bible scholars differ on the exact definitions of the various diseases, plagues, itches, and botches.

**Deut. 28:28** The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

Moses continued to describe an explicit sorry state of what would happen to Israel if God’s injunctions and commands were not followed. If the consecrated of the Gospel Age disobey God, there are spiritual counterparts for some of these calamities. For instance, when a person goes out of the truth, the results are drastic. Jesus said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23).

“Madness” is unsoundness of mind, and “blindness” is unsoundness of vision. “Astonishment of heart” is surprise. For example, some brethren have had frightening literal experiences where Satan or the fallen angels spoke to them or they had terrifying visions.

**Q:** Are these punishments for disobedience still applicable to the nation of Israel today?

**A:** We do not know, but we are inclined to think not, for Moses was describing conditions that existed during the 450-year Period of the Judges, when the nation went into captivity many times and a judge was raised up. In the Period of the Kings, there were longer times before the punishments for disobedience occurred. King Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion was the primary punishment, although the ten tribes were taken into captivity earlier. Finally the Romans came, ending with the AD 69-70 dispersion.

**Deut. 28:29** And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.



Both literally and spiritually, this condition is bad. When one gets into this situation spiritually through disobedience, only God can save him, and much care and penitence are required for forgiveness. The great majority fail because either they go back into the world or the nominal Church, or they commit suicide.

**Deut. 28:30** **Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.**

This curse came on the nation in 606 BC with the Babylonian captivity and also in AD 69-70 under the Romans. God's displeasure mounted until His fury came up into His face. He is a God of patience, but after a period of time, there comes righteous indignation.

**Q:** The Prophet Habakkuk wrote about the dreadful conditions that would be coming in 606 BC, and in that prophecy, he showed that the righteous element would be very distressed with what they saw and would wonder why God was not stopping the evil. In antitype, the Great Company will have these sentiments in the great Time of Trouble. Therefore, can we see in some of these curses on natural Israel overtones for the soon-to-come trouble at the end of the age? It seems that there will be a worldwide repeat of the curses at that time.

**A:** Yes. The clue that these conditions will be particularly incumbent upon the Great Company class are found in the closing verses of the Book of Habakkuk. Formerly, the first chapter seemed to apply to communism and anarchy, but now we see that the Muslim situation will be the last trial of the true Church. The struggle will be Islam versus Christianity, and alignment in the church-state hour of power will seem necessary for the very survival of civilization as it is known today. We are drawing closer and closer to this standoff, for the principles are already in place. The Great Company class will experience great disappointment and gnashing of teeth, but they will survive spiritually because they will be given a message to deliver. "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" will be their attitude when they are strengthened (Hab. 3:18). Even though evil conditions exist, they will get the silver cup of survival as far as their hopes for life are concerned.

**Comment:** The Kingdom promises are the reverse of verse 30: "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21,22).

**Reply:** Both collectively and individually, there is a price to pay. What a man sows, that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7).

**Deut. 28:31** **Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them.**

Verse 31, among other verses, reminds us of Job. His supposed comforters thought he was guilty because of all the trials that came upon him. Actually, God rewarded Job in the present life, before the Kingdom, to show that his experiences were an exception. The experiences were a lesson for Job's contemporaries, showing why God thought so highly of him. We have to be thoroughly familiar with the Bible in order to realize the exceptions where obedient and faithful individuals had extreme experiences and trials. When Jesus died on the Cross, the conclusion was, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). However, examples in the Old Testament show that rare exceptions occur to the rarest individuals to prove and develop them, and not because of disobedience. Generally speaking, it is true that those who

lead a dissolute and wanton life pay a penalty—whether the problem is drugs, alcohol, food, money, or something else. The general rule is obvious, but exceptions do occur.

**Deut. 28:32** Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thine hand.

Israel's sons and daughters were given to another people in the Babylonian captivity. Very few, relatively speaking, were taken into captivity, for the rest were slain. The Jewish race was preserved genetically by those who survived and were taken captive. Out of millions, only 4,600 Jews were spared and taken to Babylon in the three captivities (Jer. 52:28-30). The women were spared if they were attractive virgins.

**Comment:** When the 70 years of desolation on the land were fulfilled, only 50,000 Jews returned to Israel.

**Reply:** The Jews multiplied in captivity. In fact, God told them that when they went into captivity, they were to have as many children as possible. Percentage-wise, of the number in captivity at the end of the 70 years, very few had the faith to go back to the homeland.

During the Jewish Age, God always had at least two witnesses preaching contemporaneously so that the people could never say they did not have an opportunity to understand His purpose and what was coming. Rumors about what the prophets were saying spread throughout the land with the result that people said such things as, "A madman has been speaking at the gate. Have you heard or seen him?" They called attention to the robe the prophet was wearing. Isaiah was unrobed for a couple of years, wearing only a loincloth. His message was, "What is happening to me will happen to the few of you who will survive when God's judgment comes." Many of the prophets had unusual voices or other characteristics so that rumors of their doings were circulated, and no one who desired prophetic information had an excuse for saying, "There is no God" or "Why isn't God doing something?"

**Deut. 28:33** The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed always:

**Deut. 28:34** So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

**Deut. 28:35** The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

**Comment:** It usually takes several weeks for us to study a chapter, so we can only imagine the *power* of being there and hearing all of these curses in one sitting with the inflection of Moses' voice. These warnings for disobedience should have gone into the marrow of their bones.

**Reply:** Yes. Similarly, when Moses said, "Let something happen that has never happened before," the earth opened up and swallowed people, yet the very next day the survivors were complaining. Such are the foibles of the fallen, depraved human nature.

**Comment:** The disobedience of the Israelites also happened because they neglected the practice of reading the Law every seven years.

**Reply:** That is true because their interests were along other lines. Their minds were where their hearts were. When we see pictures of the grotesque idols, we wonder how they could have been attracted to such. Many of the clay and wooden gods were of human females in seductive

forms. Sadism seems to attract a certain element of society.

There is not much hope for people who have catered to depraved tastes over the years, for depravity becomes a part of their character. The closer one gets to incorrigibility in the present life, the more he will want to revert back to his former ways in the Kingdom. While Satan is very wily and intellectual, he also fosters depravity. How depraved Lucifer, that former grand archangel, has become! Those who follow his ways likewise become degraded. The sadistic nature is abominable. We believe that those who have violently and sadistically killed others have very little likelihood of obtaining life in the Kingdom. They will be given an opportunity to know about Christ, but we do not believe they will be able to endure the retribution that will be required if they are to get life. The Adversary takes advantage of the proclivities of our fallen nature. He knows our weaknesses, and he caters to those desires.

**Deut. 28:36** The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

**Deut. 28:37** And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.

**Comment:** Some of Israel's kings were taken to foreign lands and made subject to other kings. In effect, the heads became tails and bywords. Jeremiah 24:9 reads, "And I will deliver them [the people] to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them."

**Deut. 28:38** Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it.

The pronouncement of these curses should put all critics to silence, for God has given ample warning. Not only can man's conscience tell him about depravity, but even nature teaches that there is a God. The sun, the moon, the universe, the animals, etc., are all evidences of a Creator. In addition, the Israelites had the Old Testament, which included the Mosaic Law, so nobody can claim ignorance.

It is our thought that God answers those who obey their conscience and search and pray, even if they are in heathen lands. Even though at the time they were living, the gospel may not have gone to their land, some extraordinary thing happened whereby they had an opportunity as an individual.

**Comment:** "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

**Deut. 28:39** Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.

**Deut. 28:40** Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit.

**Deut. 28:41** Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.

**Deut. 28:42** All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.

**Deut. 28:43** The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.

**Deut. 28:44** He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

**Deut. 28:45** Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:

**Comment:** Verse 45 is prophetic, for God knew that the Israelites would not hearken to His commandments.

**Reply:** While Moses said that Jehovah would prove them to see whether or not they loved Him, nothing much happened during the days of Joshua. There was no need for special punishment for disobedience until after Joshua's death. Nor were there special blessings for obedience during his leadership, for when the Israelites entered the land and conquered the inhabitants, they obtained, as spoils, what had already been harvested and stored. Thus not until the Period of the Judges were there alternating periods of obedience and disobedience. By then enough time had elapsed for the Israelites to forget God's instructions.

**Deut. 28:46** And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.

**Comment:** What a great price the Heavenly Father sets on obedience!

**Comment:** The curses for disobedience were to be "for a sign and for a wonder."

**Reply:** Later in history, especially in the Kingdom Age, the Israelites will hearken back to their life under the old Law Covenant. They will then see how truthfully God forewarned them and all of these curses occurred. He said they would be blessed or cursed depending on obedience.

**Q:** Weren't the blessings and cursings also signs throughout Israel's history?

**A:** There were concurrent lessons as far as being taken into captivity and other punishments, but some of the more dramatic predictions were fulfilled in 606 BC and AD 69-70. We should keep in mind that Moses' instructions were given at least 1,000 years prior to 606 BC. At times during the Period of the Judges, the Israelites were under bondage to the Moabites, Philistines, etc., and had to pay tribute in various ways.

The words "for ever" are significant. The blessings and curses "shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever." All Jews who have not accepted Christ are still under the Mosaic Law. Thus God is constrained to keep His word even now. At present, the Jews are experiencing nothing but trouble, but what are they doing about the situation? As a nation, they are not praying. Even today as Jews under the Law, they could tap into these promises. Stated another way, the Law is still operative on the Jews except for those who have died to that covenant by accepting Christ as their Redeemer to walk in a new and living way.

**Deut. 28:47** Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

**Comment:** Verse 47 also applies to spiritual Israel. Even during trials and afflictions, we should serve God "with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things."

**Comment:** Especially in this Laodicean period, a danger for the new creature is that the increase of temporal goods will lead to lukewarmness.

**Comment:** Verse 47 indicates that obedience starts with the heart. Even under the Law, obedience had to stem from the proper heart condition, or it would be only a matter of time until the Israelites would begin to fall. They were to serve God joyfully not only for the gift of life but also for all of their additional blessings.

**Deut. 28:48** Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

**Deut. 28:49** The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

**Q:** Is verse 49 talking about the Roman destruction in AD 69-70 and the Diaspora?

**A:** There were great similarities in the destructions of 606 BC and AD 69-73 in connection with the swiftness and a foreign language. The Chaldean language was particularly brusque and hard for the Jews to pronounce in comparison with the melodious Hebrew.

**Comment:** The Prophet Habakkuk said of the Babylonians, "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat" (Hab. 1:8).

**Reply:** The destructions were similar, and both were prophesied to have the swiftness of an eagle. However, the emblem of Babylon was the lion, and the emblem of Rome was the eagle. It is remarkable how far in advance of the occurrences such detail was furnished.

**Deut. 28:50** A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young:

**Deut. 28:51** And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.

**Deut. 28:52** And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

**Deut. 28:53** And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:

**Deut. 28:54** So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:

**Deut. 28:55** So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.

**Deut. 28:56** The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,

**Deut. 28:57** And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

Verses 53-57 are so gruesome that they are almost ghoulish. This prediction was fulfilled, but the Bible contains more detail about what happened during the Babylonian and the Roman sieges than secular history. It is as if we are being given confidential insight into things that have happened. We have been marvelously instructed in many areas.

**Comment:** People who were starving during the French Revolution ate their dead children and fed them to their surviving children. When sitting in peace and safety, we cannot imagine such heinous acts taking place, but people have eaten their own children.

**Reply:** It is particularly striking that in addition to her children, the “delicate woman” looked at her husband as a source of food.

**Q:** Will this condition also occur during the great Time of Trouble?

**A:** We do not know. The trouble will hit the various nations in waves at different times. However, the very statement “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time” certainly does not rule out such a condition (Dan. 12:1).

**Comment:** After the Babylonian captivity, Lamentations 2:20 recorded what happened during the siege: “Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long?” Also, during a famine, an Israelite woman came before the king, for she and another woman had agreed to eat their children. However, after the first woman gave her child for food, the second woman refused (2 Kings 6:25-29).

**Deut. 28:58** If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD;

**Deut. 28:59** Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

**Deut. 28:60** Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.

**Deut. 28:61** Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

**Deut. 28:62** And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God.

If the Israelites did not hearken after receiving certain punishments and plagues and were still stiff-necked, more stripes would be administered. They would be beaten with stripes through different plagues, and if they did not get the lesson in shorter periods of servitude, they would receive many stripes over a longer period of servitude. For instance, times of servitude during the Period of the Judges were 3, 7, and 40 years long. The Jews were forewarned that the

duration of their experiences, as well as the degree of punishment, would be proportionate to their stiff-neckedness. The punishment would occur until they were humbled and brought to repentance; then they would be restored to favor.

Verse after verse in this chapter is very negative. A particularly extraordinary prediction was that the starving mothers would eat the afterbirth of their children. The fulfillment of this prophecy will be shown in the Kingdom. Seeing what actually happened will be very beneficial, for the people will realize that the *temporary* permission of evil is the best method God could have devised for instructing and helping the human race. In His wisdom, God foresaw the superlative instructional value of the divine plan. When other universes are populated in the future and the people look back and see the history of planet Earth, they will not need a lot of additional instruction, for the pictures will be more graphic than words. Seeing the temporary permission of evil will have a lasting benefit upon future generations so that they will not have to personally experience evil as Adam did.

A *Reprint* article mentions that God's four attributes (Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power) had a conference, and each attribute gave its reason or suggestion for what the divine plan should be. They finally ended up agreeing with Wisdom that the temporary permission of evil was the best plan as a foundation for learning. The saying "Spare the rod, and spoil the child" has merit.

**Deut. 28:63** And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.

**Deut. 28:64** And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.

**Deut. 28:65** And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

**Deut. 28:66** And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

**Comment:** Verse 64 pointed to the Diaspora.

**Reply:** Yes. The Diaspora occurred more particularly about AD 135 and onward because an even more stringent edict was published. Instead of being scattered about in the immediate surrounding nations, the dispersion was pushed into more distant foreign lands.

**Deut. 28:67** In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

**Comment:** Verse 67 reminds us of the vision Isaiah had that caused him to say, "My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me" (Isa. 21:4).

**Reply:** The expression about morning and evening is unusual. When it was morning, the Israelites would wish it were evening, and when it was evening, they would wish it were morning. In other words, while certain things would happen during the daytime that were dreadful, at nighttime other types of frightening experiences would occur. Which happenings

were worse—those of the evening or those of the morning—would be hard to determine. For instance, at night the enemy would suddenly break down the door and rush into the home. In the daytime, one would be out in the field when frightening experiences would occur.

Spiritually speaking, the same would be true. Jesus said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). That text pertains more to mental darkness, but the Christian can also receive physical (the flesh), mental (the mind), and moral experiences. Which is worse is hard to distinguish. If we had a choice, we would be like David when God said that one of three plagues would come upon him. David replied, “You are a merciful God. I will go by your decision. Choose the punishment you think is best.”

**Comment:** A more recent application of verse 67 is the Holocaust with the attendant suffering in the death camps. There was no relief in the morning or in the evening. Only in death did relief come to many.

**Deut. 28:68** And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

**Comment:** It would be interesting to show the curses in Deuteronomy to Christians outside of our fellowship, for if their viewpoint were correct, God would have said, “For disobedience you will suffer in hell,” but all of these sufferings pertain to the present life.

**Reply:** Yes, we can extrapolate spiritual lessons, for the things that happened to Israel are examples for the Christian (1 Cor. 10:11).

“There ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.” At first glance, there seems to be a contradiction in this portion of verse 68. The explanation is that there were two different kinds of servitude. (1) A person was bought as a slave, and the master could do almost anything he pleased to that individual. (2) The person actually benefited when bought because the purchaser made him a teacher of his children or an instructor along a scientific or musical line. Incidentally, the Jews who were spared the longest in the Holocaust were good singers and musicians, for the Nazis thought they were useful for entertainment purposes.

**Deut. 29:1** These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

How startling! The translators properly kept verse 1 separate and distinct, almost like a superscription. In addition to the original Law Covenant made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai at the beginning of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses made a separate covenant with them just before entry into the Promised Land at the end of the 40 years. The reason for this second covenant is that it was made with a new generation; that is, the prior generation had all expired except for Joshua and Caleb. Although this second covenant was like a reiteration of the first covenant, certain statements were slightly different, and some details were added.

**Deut. 29:2** And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land;

**Deut. 29:3** The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles:



What were the “great temptations”? From one perspective, the Israelites were tempted because God was proving them—proving whether or not they loved Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. From another perspective, God raised up a Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus who would be obstinate and contrary. Despite the severity of the first nine plagues, he would not let the Israelites leave until the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn.

**Deut. 29:4 Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.**

When are a person’s eyes opened? God gives an understanding heart in proportion to one’s willing obedience. If a person is humble, meek, submissive, and teachable, the Lord rewards him with information and instruction. Conversely, information and instruction are withheld from those who are not in the proper heart condition to receive such benefits.

**Deut. 29:5 And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.**

Verse 5 affirms that the period of wandering in the wilderness was 40 years long, from leaving Egypt to entering the Promised Land. God prepared the second generation of Israelites to enter the land. When we read about the first generation, who had been in Egypt, we see negatives—grumbings and murmurings—but in a few instances, God said that He liked the second generation. However, He foretold that succeeding generations would revert back to the old condition of not being as obedient as they should be. Therefore, in time the Israelites would need certain experiences and oppressions, but when they were still on the east side of Jordan and about to enter the Promised Land, they were blessed with victories over the giants and enemies far superior to them in numbers and strength. Thus that current generation was quite changed from their parents, as the Book of Joshua will show, for some remarkable changes became apparent, even if they were only temporary.

**Deut. 29:6 Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God.**

In other words, “You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink so that you might know I am the LORD your God.” During the 40 years, the Israelites basically ate manna, “bread from heaven” (Exod. 16:4). The simplicity of diet was helpful in the final analysis.

**Deut. 29:7 And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:**

**Deut. 29:8 And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh.**

The 2 1/2 tribes had their inheritance on the far (east) side of Jordan, picturing the spiritual inheritance of the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the Ancient Worthies (at the end of the Kingdom Age).

**Deut. 29:9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.**

**Comment:** Moses summed up what he had just said: “Look how God has blessed you. You survived the wilderness journey and prospered. Now you owe it to God and to yourselves to follow His commandments.” Many times the Israelites said “yes” but did not obey.

**Reply:** Yes, the two generations reacted differently. Relatively little is said in the Pentateuch about the younger generation, with whom God was pleased. Most of what is recorded pertains to the murmuring and the complaining of the older generation, who died.

As we continue this chapter, notice how Moses spoke almost like a “thus saith the LORD.”

**Deut. 29:10** Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel,

**Deut. 29:11** Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:

**Comment:** We can visualize all of the people—old and young, captains, men, and wives—standing before Jehovah. They were probably standing in an orderly and organized fashion as Moses was waiting to get their commitment.

**Reply:** Yes. People of different stages of growth and development and of various levels of office were all standing at attention.

**Q:** Who were the “strangers”?

**A:** They were the younger generation of the Egyptians who had come out of Egypt with the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. As proselytes, they had a happy attitude of heart and a true spirit of reverence somewhat like Ruth the Moabitess.

**Deut. 29:12** That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day:

**Deut. 29:13** That he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Moses now enjoined the Israelites, whereas earlier he had spoken the commandments of the Lord. Knowing his demise was about to take place, he was more or less giving his swan song, and his words actually became a song a little later (Deut. 31:19-22). A mixture of men, women, and children, old and young, stood in silence at rapt attention—almost as if a Holy Spirit influence were over the whole nation. No disturbance occurred, and all could hear Moses’ instructions clearly. Behavior was proper and respectful while he spoke *for many hours*, giving *meaningful* instruction.

**Deut. 29:14** Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath;

**Deut. 29:15** But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day:

Moses made the covenant and oath not only with those standing before him that day but also with those who were not there. In other words, he anticipated and understood that when he wrote these words on a scroll, future generations of Israelites would read about his instructions and the experiences of the nation during the 40 years in the wilderness. Stated another way, the instructions and the experiences would be recorded for their posterity.

**Deut. 29:16** (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came

through the nations which ye passed by;

**Deut. 29:17** And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)

**Deut. 29:18** Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

A root of gall or wormwood would result from worshipping heathen gods. The genetic strain would go down through the generations. In fact, while the Egyptian “strangers” who entered the Promised Land at this time were faithful, the genetic strain of false religion cropped up in their progeny in later history.

**Deut. 29:19** And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

**Deut. 29:20** The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

Curses would come on any Israelites then alive or yet to be born who worshipped heathen gods of other nations. During the six years of Joshua’s leadership, the people refrained from such worship, but as soon as Joshua died, false religions became a problem. Accordingly, blessings and cursings are peculiarly manifest in the historical account.

“The LORD will not spare him [who worships false gods], but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.” How could their names be blotted out “from under heaven” when they will come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom Age?

**Comment:** The wording infers that many of these individuals will not change their ways in the Kingdom.

**Comment:** In the antitype, the present age is the opportunity for spiritual Israelites.

**Reply:** Yes, now is the day of salvation for the Christian—or of nonsalvation if one abandons his consecration.

During the Jewish Age, especially during the Period of the Judges and the Period of the Kings, God was preparing the Israelites to accept Messiah at the First Advent. Those who were very wicked (and upon whom the curses came) had no progeny, for their progeny were cut off through some providence—even though the individuals themselves will be awakened in the Kingdom Age. For example, Jeremiah 52:28-30 tells about the three captivities that occurred after the days of King Josiah. Since only a couple hundred males survived, future generations came from those few Jewish males. All of the other Jewish males—millions of them—perished with no progeny. The Israelites were cut down to just a few people, relatively speaking, but by the time of the First Advent, they had developed into a population of about 7 million people.

**Deut. 29:21** And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:

**Deut. 29:22** So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it;

**Deut. 29:23** And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

**Deut. 29:24** Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?

All of these things happened, but aside from the Bible, there are no historical books to substantiate the curses. Certain passages in the Book of Jeremiah give statements from the mouth of Jehovah through the prophet that these curses would happen. They were fulfilled in three periods of desolation—in 606 BC, from AD 69-73, and in the Bar Kochba desolation of AD 135. Mark Twain, the famous writer, visited Israel. When he returned to the United States and lectured, he said that he had expected to see fruitfulness in the Land of Promise, but instead it was the most miserable place he had ever visited. He found disease, malaria swamps, dry land in other areas, extreme poverty, and antiquated living conditions. Of course conditions have greatly changed since his day.

**Comment:** The prosperity of the land in the Jewish settlements in Gaza is amazing. The abundance of flowers, crops, and produce shows what Israel has given back to the Palestinians.

**Deut. 29:25** Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:

**Deut. 29:26** For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them:

**Deut. 29:27** And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:

**Deut. 29:28** And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.

In anger, wrath, and great indignation, Jehovah would root out of the land of Israel those who worshipped and served other gods. As in Leviticus 26, God was foretelling the Israelites that after all their experiences of being temporarily under bondage to other peoples such as the Philistines, they would eventually have the harder experience of being scattered throughout the earth. In this chapter of Deuteronomy, God was beginning to indicate that the Jews would be taken out of the land itself.

**Deut. 29:29** The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Blindness comes through disobedience and neglect, whereas obedience is rewarded with clarity of vision—not only along prophetic lines but also in character development. Just as natural Israel conquered the Promised Land foot by foot, so it is with spiritual Israel in principle. Each step of faith and obedience receives a compensatory reward, which sometimes comes under

stressful circumstances. God opens our eyes accordingly. Conversely, disobedience dulls our eyes. Jesus said of those who eventually go into Second Death, “How great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23).

**Comment:** It is so beautiful to know that even though Israel did not keep their covenant with God, He will keep His promise to them based on the covenant with Abraham, and we are blessed to know with certainty that the Ancient Worthies will receive a better resurrection.

**Reply:** Yes. This chapter is summed up in a constructive way.

**Q:** How would we apply the principle of verse 29 to the Christian?

**A:** Prophetic truths are not revealed until the due time, whereas truths pertaining to character have been available throughout the Gospel Age. Verse 29 is very positive and constructive along character lines, but forewarnings of danger that are necessary from a prophetic or dispensational standpoint are given on a conditional basis and at the due time for their understanding.

**Q:** Can verse 29 be used in the sense of 1 Timothy 1:4, “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith”? We should not spend time on subjects not covered in the Bible, for although they may contain some truth, only God can sort out the truth from the error.

**A:** Yes. Astrology and mythology are examples of studies that Christians should avoid.

**Deut. 30:1** And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

The full fulfillment of this chapter will occur when the Holy Remnant is delivered out of Jacob’s Trouble. The clue for this statement is, “Thou shalt call them [the blessings and the cursings] to mind *among all the nations*, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee.” The reference cannot be to the Babylonian captivity because the Jews were not scattered among *all nations* at that time.

**Comment:** How amazing that Moses prophesied the return *yet future*, way down the stream of time, before the Israelites ever entered the Promised Land!

**Deut. 30:2** And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

At that time, the survivors, the Jews comprising the Holy Remnant, will obey God’s voice and return to Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength according to all that Moses commanded more than 3,000 years ago. Specifically, the reference is to the *second* regathering, which will take place after Jacob’s Trouble. They will return not only to the land but also to the God of Israel. The *severity* of the trouble will be needed for them to return with this fullness.

**Deut. 30:3** That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

The first regathering has mostly taken place already. After the Kingdom is set up, a second

influx will occur, for the Gentiles will gladly help the holy, spared Jews back to Israel at that time. When the Gentile survivors of Gog and Magog return to their various homelands and tell what they witnessed during Jacob's Trouble, their eyewitness testimony will cause the Gentiles who hear it to ask those they see, "Are you Jews? If so, you belong back in Israel." Assistance, as well as gifts, will be provided for their return to Israel.

**Comment:** Jeremiah 16:14,15 reads, "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

**Reply:** There is a gathering before Jacob's Trouble and a gathering after Jacob's Trouble. The Jeremiah text hints of these two regatherings, one of Jews from "the north" and one of Jews from "all the lands" where God has driven them. There are at least five different types of projection maps with different perspectives. On some maps, "north" looks like Europe. On other maps, "north" is Russia and Turkey. Iran and Iraq can also appear to be north of Israel.

**Deut. 30:4** If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

The Jews will be brought back from the uttermost parts of the earth. We can see how extensive the regathering will ultimately be, for some Jews live in very remote places. When Jews in Gentile lands survive the great Time of Trouble, the Gentiles will note that God's providence has preserved a Holy Remnant to go back to Israel. We believe many of the Holy Remnant are already in Israel and are being prepared for their survival, but the rest of the Holy Remnant will be encouraged to return from Gentile lands in the second regathering. In fact, they will be shamed if they are at all reluctant to return because of family or other social ties.

**Comment:** Nehemiah 1:9 reads, "But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there."

**Reply:** This same theme is repeated. Almost everything that God says in Scripture is confirmed at least twice.

**Deut. 30:5** And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

God promised to bring the Jews into the land and "multiply" them above their fathers. The multiplication will be greater than anything in the past, for Israel will eventually be packed to the gills with returnees. At the present time, some of Israel's leaders have been asking for and encouraging more and more Jews to return because the multiplication of Arabs in the land is so prodigious. Obadiah 19,20 reads, "And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south." Today Gilead is basically in the hands of Jordan, but that land will become part of Israel.

**Comment:** Zechariah 10:10 is also pertinent: "I will bring them again also out of the land of

Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.”

**Comment:** Hosea 1:10 states, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”

**Reply:** From another standpoint too, Israel will be greatly multiplied. To get blessings when the Kingdom is established, the Gentiles will have to become proselytes to the Jewish religion and the God of Israel. In fact, the saved people of earth will eventually go to other planets, that is, in the ages of ages after the Little Season. At that time, Jesus and the Little Flock will be disbursed throughout the universe. The word “Israel” means “people of God,” and all people will have the same law and religion.

**Comment:** Isaiah 65:23 implies that children will be born in Israel during the Kingdom Age. “They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.”

**Deut. 30:6** And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Prior to 1948, many Jews returned to Israel when the desert and swamps made it a forbidding land. However, under the Lord’s providence, they labored to turn the desert into fertile grassland. The early Zionists had a pioneering spirit and faith that Israel was the Land of Promise. Even though some Jews in the land are being dispossessed now, and many are close to emotional breakdowns, they will be rewarded for such efforts and faith in the future. In the end, they will see the Lord’s goodness.

Unfortunately, many Jews today are secular, especially the youth. Israeli society is being corrupted. Therefore, a purging, a cleansing, must occur to leave a Holy Remnant (Isa. 4:2-4).

**Deut. 30:7** And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

This was a hope. God promised security and permanency to the remnant class, and their enemies, their persecutors, would be rewarded with deserved retribution.

**Comment:** To be an enemy of Israel is a serious matter. God said to Abraham way back in Genesis, “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

**Reply:** Yes, we can see the necessity for purging the enemies eventually. Sometimes when retribution occurs, it is not recognized as such. Later, when history is understood, it will be seen how the Lord pays back. Many people do not realize how personalized the judgments can be from God’s standpoint for what is done that is inimical to the interests of Jewry. The same principle of retribution applies to true spiritual Israel.

**Deut. 30:8** And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

As Israel’s enemies receive retribution, the right-hearted of the nation will be rewarded with good. In a religious sense, the Holy Remnant will return to Jehovah with all their strength. As a

whole, the nation is secular-minded today particularly the government. The Holy Remnant will be small to start with, but it will grow, especially when Jews are gathered from the utmost corners of the earth.

**Deut. 30:9** And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

What good news! Verse 9 expresses the hope of Israel.

**Comment:** The term “fruit of thy body” again sounds as if children will be born in Israel in the Kingdom.

**Reply:** Yes, many Scriptures verify that thought. Not much attention has been given to the role of childbearing in the Kingdom, and it is of relative nonimportance to the Christian, for other Scriptures are more pertinent and necessary. However, as we get more familiar with the content of the Old Testament, we realize that quite a number of children will be born in the Kingdom Age. This is especially true with regard to the priesthood of Ezekiel’s Temple (Ezek. 44:22). In time, childbearing will phase out, as the Pastor taught. At the end of the Kingdom Age, the sex gender will change for natural man.

In the Book of Leviticus, the Christian focus has properly been on chapters 8, 9, and 16, for they deal with the development of the Church. The other chapters are interesting, but we should first master, as best we can, the three chapters that are pertinent for the Christian. Then, as we have time, we should broaden our investigation of other parts of God’s Word.

**Comment:** Zephaniah 3:17 also mentions God’s rejoicing over Israel: “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

**Deut. 30:10** If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

**Comment:** The future turning to God with all one’s heart is mentioned three times in this chapter (verses 2, 6, and 10).

**Reply:** Yes. While the turning of verse 10 is conditional, some of the earlier chapters of this book express the matter another way. Instead of the word “if,” the Lord predicts that Israel *will return* to Him; that is, the Jews will eventually come to their senses. “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).

Notice that God’s commandments and statutes are written in “*this book of the law.*” The Book of Deuteronomy goes into the Law much more than the first four books of the Pentateuch.

**Deut. 30:11** For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

**Deut. 30:12** It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

**Deut. 30:13** Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?



**Deut. 30:14** But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Moses continued to speak. This time the Holy Spirit used a rhetorical question mode. Another example of rhetorical questions is Ecclesiastes 3:21,22, “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?” The questions are answered in the last chapter: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.... Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:7,8,13,14).

**Comment:** Paul addressed the subject matter of verses 11-14 in Romans 10:6-8. “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”

**Comment:** Two good marginal references are the following. “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his spirit, hath sent me” (Isa. 48:16). “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (Isa. 45:19).

**Reply:** Yes. Along the same line, Nicodemus went to Jesus at night, yet the Master taught openly and honestly in the day. Jesus did not present his teachings in secret.

The form of dialogue or comment used in verses 11-14 was almost like a wake-up call. In fact, it was a little rebuke. Moses was saying, “You are looking all over for the word, but it is right here. You are seeking advance information and knowledge, but the most important knowledge is at your right hand.” Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—those who have that faith and longing—are rewarded. God calls that type of individual.

**Deut. 30:15** See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

**Deut. 30:16** In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

**Q:** In what way was Moses using the term “this day”? Since the Israelites were not on trial for life, are verses 15 and 16 more applicable to the Kingdom Age, when the world will be on trial?

**A:** In Deuteronomy 29:1, Moses said in effect, “You have the covenant I gave you at Mount Sinai. Today I am making another covenant.” Thus there were two covenants. In addition to the Law that was given at Mount Sinai, Moses had just reviewed the Law at length in his own words, saying, “Today I am setting before you a covenant. What are you going to do about it?” Subsequently Joshua’s words were similar: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, [we have made a commitment,] we will serve the LORD” (Josh.

24:15). Therefore, Moses was saying to the people, “Here is your opportunity. A proposition is put before you right now, this very day. What are you going to do? It is a time for decision making.” Moses was not referring to the giving of the Law Covenant 40 years earlier, for he was speaking to a new generation.

**Deut. 30:17** But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

The Israelites had free choice to hearken or not to hearken to God’s voice. As Christians, we made our decision with a commitment of consecration. Now the Lord is looking for obedience.

**Comment:** Two areas especially seemed to plague natural Israel: the worship of other gods and intermarriage. For spiritual Israel, the gods to beware of are usually wealth, fame, the family circle, home, and self, any or all of which can take our priorities away from Jehovah God.

**Reply:** Intermarriage was particularly a problem with Solomon in spite of his wisdom and knowledge. It is hard to see how the Israelites could worship other gods, which looked so heathenish and incorporated foolish and grotesque practices such as sacrificing live babies. With the Christian, not only is the standard higher, but the temptations along the same line are more subtle, for the areas that draw away the Christian usually start out, at least superficially, to seem proper. However, inordinate affection eventually leads one astray.

**Comment:** Even today there are instances where brethren have literally gone after strange gods. Brethren should disfellowship those who go after actual false gods.

**Reply:** Especially in the nominal Church, some delve into mysteries and other religions.

**Deut. 30:18** I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

**Comment:** Moses frequently mentioned prolongation of days as a reward for obedience.

**Reply:** Some have incorrectly reasoned that the Law promised the prolonging of days but not everlasting life for obedience. Only a perfect human being could render perfect service and obedience and thus inherit everlasting life. With fallen man, for whom perfect obedience is impossible, at least the Law promises a little prolonging of days and corresponding blessings because of one’s effort to do better.

**Deut. 30:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

**Comment:** Moses keeps emphasizing “this day.” As has been pointed out, the Israelites had to promise at the beginning of the 40 years, and now again at the end of the 40 years, to follow these instructions if they wanted life.

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death.” “Heaven and earth” were probably used here from the standpoint of outlasting current testimony. For instance, at Shechem, Joshua reminded the Israelites of certain things and said, “This stone will bear witness” (Josh. 24:24-27). The principle is shown by the fact that a tiny silicon chip in a computer is able to store a tremendous amount of information, including verbal instructions. Here in verse 19, Moses must have pointed to a large stone as he spoke, indicating that the stone could be a witness. In other words, it was technically possible to have a

stone announce what was spoken to it by the nation. As Jesus said, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40). With this quality being inherent in stone, technology today can make a silicon chip that is capable of retaining memory and sound. Thus heaven and earth outlast all civilizations. The earth abides and is a lasting witness, whereas generations pass off the scene and are silenced in death (Eccl. 1:4).

The choice was between “life and death, blessing and cursing.” Then he added, “Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” No coercion was involved back there. The choice was strictly freewill. In the Kingdom, Jesus will override freedom of choice because otherwise some would make the wrong decision, never having known that there is a better way. Therefore, obedience will be made mandatory, and all will have to bow the knee (Phil. 2:10,11). Those who refuse to hear the voice of that prophet will be cut off without prolongation of opportunity (Acts 3:23). Those who at least tacitly obey will be given a 100-year trial. And those who make sufficient progress during the 100 years will continue to live and be further tested at the end of the Kingdom. They will be exercising free moral agency. Some people are so conditioned by their environment and their experiences that they are turned off and would not make the right choices unless their eyes and ears were opened. God’s promise of the *opportunity* for life in the Kingdom is predicated upon the opportunity *to hear*. Thus no one will have the excuse “I did not know” (Isa. 35:8). Knowledge of Jehovah will be mandatory (Hab. 2:14). However, what each individual does with the knowledge from that point forward is another matter.

**Q:** Does the word “seed” refer to a yet unborn seed?

**A:** Yes. There will be no stillborn children in the Kingdom. In addition, successive “seeds,” or generations, will be prolonged. The children will be more likely to obey in proportion to the obedience of their parents. Even prior to the First Advent, vulgar disobedience was often rewarded with the penalty that the individual would have no seed. And if the individual already had seed, that seed would have no offspring.

**Comment:** Exodus 20:5 comes to mind: “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Succeeding generations were blessed or punished according to the obedience or disobedience of the parents. As a whole, the nation of Israel was blessed because of the faith of the fathers.

**Comment:** With regard to Korah’s rebellion, some of his children were killed along with him.

**Reply:** Yes, some died and others prolonged their days for not supporting him in his disobedience. A number of Psalms state that the sons of Korah sang in the chorus, so some of his sons survived—those who were not in harmony with him.

**Deut. 30:20** That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Notice the ascending scale: “that thou mayest *love* the LORD thy God, ... *obey* his voice, and ... *cleave* unto him.” “Love” is like the first step of a ladder in this particular perspective. In regard to cleaving, one so loves God that he does not want to be separated under any circumstance. The person cleaves because God is his only hope—he keeps the sure and steadfast anchor of hope within the veil (Heb. 6:19).

**Deut. 31:1** And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.

**Deut. 31:2** And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

**Q:** Does the statement “I can no more go out and come in” refer to Moses’ going into the Tabernacle and coming back out?

**A:** Yes. Moses no longer had the responsibility of going into the Tabernacle to hear what God said and then coming out to explain to the nation what His will was. Moses could no longer minister unto the people as a mediator. His mediatorship was expiring that day, for shortly after this swan song, he would go up into Mount Nebo to die.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 34:7 reads, “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force [strength] abated.” This text proves that the change in Moses’ responsibility was not due to his age or any infirmity but was because Joshua would be taking over.

**Reply:** Yes, Moses was not feeble; his mediatorship simply expired. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam lived very wholesome lives, and even though Aaron was weak in some areas, he was called a “saint” of God (Psa. 106:16). When Moses was up in Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights, which was a long time to wait, Aaron and the others wondered what had happened to him. None of them could have imagined that Moses was communing with God. We can appreciate the test on Aaron and the others. Lacking character, fiber, and strength, the people succumbed to debauchery in connection with the golden calf.

**Comment:** Numbers 27:18-23 shows the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.”

**Reply:** Yes. Moses knew in advance about his demise and when it would occur. He knew he would not be going into the Promised Land.

There is a hint that Joshua fasted for 40 days and 40 nights while he waited for Moses to come down from Mount Sinai. Joshua stayed in the outer perimeter but was still up in the mountain, whereas the other elders descended and were down with the rest of the Israelites.

**Q:** The 40 days that Moses was up in the mount were a long time to wait. Can the 40 days be likened to this end of the age when the vision seems to tarry (Hab. 2:2,3)? Moses’ coming down with his face shining is antitypically associated with the inauguration of the Kingdom.

**A:** The implication in Habakkuk is, “Though the vision *seems* to tarry, it will surely come to pass.” The text hints that the chronology as explained in the *Second Volume* is correct. However, the assumption, based on that chronology, that the Church would be complete in 1914, the end of Gentile Times, was incorrect. God is an exact mathematician, so nothing can either delay or

accelerate the completion of the Church and the establishment of the Kingdom. When we pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” we are wishing it were here, but it will be established according to God’s timetable.

**Deut. 31:3** The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

The situation was stated two ways: (1) *God* would go over the river Jordan before the Israelites and destroy the enemy nations, and (2) *Joshua* would go over before the Israelites. Both perspectives are correct.

Joshua is a picture of Jesus, who goes *before* the Christian; that is, his sheep of the Gospel Age know his voice and follow him, and none other will they follow. In the Kingdom Age, the situation will be reversed, for the people will hear a voice *behind* them, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa. 30:21). Since Isaiah 30:21 applies principally to the Kingdom Age, the only way we can see that the Isaiah text applies to Christians is to look into God’s Word for Jesus’ voice when we come to a fork in the road and do not know whether to go to the right or to the left. In other words, we look at the past (behind us) in the Word.

**Deut. 31:4** And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed.

**Deut. 31:5** And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

Moses continued to give the Israelites a boost, promising them every good help. These words of encouragement had a favorable effect on Joshua and the people.

**Comment:** God deals with human beings, including us, by going back to memories. The way the Lord has led in the past gives us faith for future experiences where we cannot trace Him. Accordingly, Moses was telling the Israelites, “You saw how God took care of you in the past by defeating your enemies, Sihon and Og. He will do that in the future as well.”

**Reply:** Sihon and Og were giants, being of the *nephilim* on the east side of the river Jordan. However, giants still remained on the west side of Jordan. In addition, the Amorites were around for quite a while on both sides of the Jordan. The point is that the Israelites, a relatively *unarmed* people, defeated an *armed* people *with God’s help*. The Israelites’ ability to use the slingshot so accurately was supernatural training, much like their shoes not wearing out. God gave the Israelites good eyesight and good timing beyond what a person could do today.

Yes, faith is built up on past experiences and leadings. In situations of doubt, it is sometimes helpful to pause and look back at the Lord’s leadings in our life before we step forward. And we should trust in the Lord’s grace that if we make a wrong decision, He will overrule it for good as long as we recognize it as such.

**Deut. 31:6** Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

“Fear not” has a little different connotation than “nor be afraid of them.” In other words, “Do not fear your personal weakness. Do not compare yourself to the enemy and think that you are small, weak, and puny and the enemy is big, strong, and tall.” In reality this warfare was supernatural, and the Israelites could not have contended except for God’s grace. They (and

we) could be successful based on faith and obedience. Both Joshua and the people got this encouragement from Moses to be strong. When Joshua took over, he again gave this same advice to the people (Josh. 1:5-7,9).

**Deut. 31:7** And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

**Deut. 31:8** And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Moses was very close to the Heavenly Father. In fact, he is the only one of all the prophets, with the exception of Jesus, with whom God spoke face to face, as it were (Deut. 34:10). How nice for Joshua to be encouraged with this blessing by Moses, where the words were repeated to him personally! Moses probably looked directly at Joshua while speaking the second time.

Joshua would be fighting very powerful nations, but Moses said, “Be strong and of a good courage: ... fear not, neither be dismayed.” Each one of the seven nations to be dispossessed from the land was mightier in number and strength than Israel (Deut. 7:1). Thus Joshua needed this admonition.

**Deut. 31:9** And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.

There is no evidence of two copies being made of “this law.” However, we believe that Joshua made a second copy at a later time. What Moses wrote at this time was not put into the Ark of the Covenant itself but into a sheaf, or contraption, at the side of the Ark. When the Israelites went from place to place, the “law” was outside the Ark and thus was available for reference and additives as needed.

Probably this writing by Moses was only the Deuteronomy portion of the Pentateuch. Even so, it was so voluminous that it comprised several scrolls. With regard to scholars who think this lengthy work was written twice at this point in time, we would like to see the party who could do so under the crude conditions that existed back there with skins, pen, and ink. The length is amazing, even with one copy. Moses first wrote down the words and then spoke twice on the same day from memory, not reading the copy. As we look at maps and calculate the time of the Israelites’ entry into the land, we do not see how he would have had time to write down the words afterwards. In the meantime too, he had to die. Therefore, we think he recorded the thoughts and admonitions beforehand, and only short additives, done quickly, came later at the end of Deuteronomy. Ezra, the scribe, put the scrolls in a proper sequence several hundred years later and inserted the additives in their proper places in the narrative.

Notice that Moses delivered “this law ... unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.” We feel the word “and” means “even” here; that is, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were present, and Moses formally presented the writing to them. After the formal presentation was over, “this law” was placed in the sheath on the side of the Ark (verse 26).

**Q:** Did the priests subsequently have liberty to refer to Moses’ writings?

**A:** Yes, that was the purpose of placing the writings on the side of the Ark.

At this time, there were only two priests, Eleazar and Ithamar. Eleazar, whose name means

“God is helper,” picturing the Little Flock, was considered the primary priest, and Ithamar, meaning “land of palms,” was secondary, representing the Great Company. In the transitory state on this side of the veil, we cannot make the distinction between the Little Flock and the Great Company. In observing us and exercising omniscience, God knows which of the consecrated will prevail to become part of the Little Flock. The point is that on this side of the veil, we should consider one another as of equal status as children of God. Of course we can see that some are more or less talented, but those qualities have nothing to do with family and love relationships in and of themselves, for one can have all knowledge and be a castaway. Or one could have little knowledge yet be acceptable. Thus on this side of the veil, the Eleazar and Ithamar classes are the same, both being priests, but in the final analysis, in this particular moment of the account, only Eleazar pictures the Little Flock.

**Q:** Is verse 9 used to prove that Moses wrote at least Exodus through Deuteronomy?

**A:** Yes. There is no indication in Scripture that God revealed the account of creation word by word to Moses. Rather, Noah and Shem handed down scrolls of the earlier part of Genesis. The account eventually went through Abraham and others.

Based on the size of the Ark of the Covenant versus the size of all the scrolls from Genesis through Deuteronomy, Genesis would not have been included either on the inside or the outside of the Ark. In the Ark were Aaron’s rod that budded, the golden pot of manna, and the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. A small chest, the Ark was only 2.5 cubits long, 1.5 cubits high, and 1.5 cubits wide.

**Comment:** The common expression “the five books of Moses,” meaning the Pentateuch or Torah, includes the Book of Genesis.

**Reply:** That is true, but the expression does not mean that Moses had to write Genesis all over again. He was merely the compiler, putting Genesis with the other scrolls that he wrote. Scrolls were handed down to Moses, and he added the writings for his day, that is, from the Exodus through the end of the 40 years. The scrolls of Genesis and Job were past history and had already been written. When the journeying of the Ark was finished and the Temple was built, copies were made of the scrolls.

Many of the scrolls were limited, for Leiser mentions only 24 books of the Old Testament. The thought is not that there were only 24 scrolls but that there were 24 parts. Moreover, the Book of Psalms was written in five parts, or pieces. The pieces could be sewn together but only up to a certain limit where the size could be handled. For that reason, there was a tendency to stick to the Torah. Over the centuries came the Half Torah and Jewish books that were mixed in. However, only the books in our Bible do we consider canonical, or inspired Scriptures.

**Deut. 31:10** And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,

**Deut. 31:11** When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

At the end of every seven years, in the year of solemnity or release, the Law was to be read before all Israel, yet the reading is mentioned in only about three places in Scripture. For a long period of time, the reading was neglected, and every man did what he thought was right (Judg. 17:6). We can understand how the solemnity reading of the Law could not take place while the Israelites were fighting wars, but we know there was a paucity of reading because of what the Scriptures say. For example, King Josiah revived a major feast that had not been observed for

years. Thus, as time went on, the Israelites began to rely too much on themselves. Even historic books written about the Bible do not mention the reading of the Law every seven years.

Incidentally, Ezra and Nehemiah, who were very different in temperament, were both true to the core. Ezra was strict, requiring the Israelites to put away their foreign wives. Nehemiah was honest and honorable, but being more of a diplomat, he was able to accomplish certain things for which Ezra was not fit. Although Ezra excelled from a scholastic and disciplinarian standpoint, Nehemiah also had to get strict on his second sabbatical.

**Comment:** When Nehemiah returned and saw that the Israelite children did not know how to speak Hebrew, he smote certain Israelite men out of righteous indignation (Neh. 13:24,25).

**Comment:** Joshua 8:34,35 tells of an instance when the Law was read. “And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.”

The land and servants had a “year of release.” The Law was to be read to the Israelites “in the place which he [God] shall choose.” In the final sense, that place was the Temple in Jerusalem, but first, it was the Tabernacle, which resided at Shiloh for hundreds of years. The Law was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurred on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and lasted for seven days. At that time, the Israelites were free from some of their earlier burdens and activities of the year and could pay closer attention to God’s Law and meditate on it.

**Comment:** “At the *end* of every seven years” means “at the *turn* of every seven years” in the Hebrew. The end of the sixth month, which was the beginning of the seventh month, marked the turn of the sun, that is, the year. The Law was to be read on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which was the Feast of Tabernacles, in the seventh year, which was the year of release.

**Comment:** Joshua 8:30-32 reads, “Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.”

**Reply:** Yes, Joshua copied Deuteronomy.

**Deut. 31:12** Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:

All of the Israelites were to gather to hear the reading of the Law, including women, children, and even the “stranger ... within thy gates,” that is, proselytes. They stood as they listened. What was the purpose of the reading? The people were to hear and learn so that they would fear God and do all the words of the Law.

**Deut. 31:13** And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Sometimes what parents drum into the ears of their children for years begins to stick in later



life. Brethren have given talks about the instruction of their parents when they were little children. Thus childhood is a time of tender and sensitive years in which outstanding things seem to go deeper into memory.

**Deut. 31:14** And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.

**Deut. 31:15** And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

**Comment:** This experience would have been very emotional for both Moses and Joshua.

**Reply:** Yes, especially since they had been together in close camaraderie for 40 years in the truth that existed at that time. Now they were about to part. Joshua would have been nervous not only because of the parting but also because of the responsibility about to be laid on his shoulders.

**Comment:** The statement to Moses, “Behold, thy days approach that thou must die,” must have been a shock.

**Reply:** Yes, although his death would be a peaceful rest and sleep.

Moses and Joshua presented themselves in the Tabernacle of the congregation. There God gave Joshua “a charge,” that is, instruction and a synopsis of his responsibility.

**Q:** Normally, the pillar of the cloud was attached to the Shekinah light in the Most Holy. Did the pillar now move forward to the door of the Tabernacle?

**A:** Yes, it shifted forward to be over the door of the Tabernacle. Since Moses and Joshua were to present themselves in a public fashion, they went before the door of the Tabernacle. The same principle was shown when the two live goats, the Lord’s goat and the scapegoat, were tied to the door, to be subsequently dealt with separately, the Lord’s goat first (Lev. 16:7-10). Moses was probably on one side and Joshua on the other side, corresponding to the two posts of the door of the Tabernacle. At first, the pillar of the cloud would be centered between them and over the door. Perhaps Moses and Joshua were both kneeling as they faced the Tabernacle door, although they could have been standing reverently.

**Comment:** The cloud, which had the texture of a normal cloud, was above the entire nation with the pillar (like a column or a chimney) descending from it. As the nation viewed the scene straight on instead of by looking up, the cloud and pillar were contrary to nature.

**Reply:** Yes, the view was even more spectacular with the column. No matter how the people were situated or were marching, all of them could see the column in the distance in front of them. The cloud was called the “angel of God” not only because it led the Israelites in different directions through the wadis but because the people seemed to sense an intelligence in the pillar (Exod. 14:19). Although they thought of that intelligence as Jehovah, it was probably the Logos in many cases. In any event, the cloud was their means of communication with God, and it had a sensitivity to their protection. The people sensed the cover above them and the leadership that it provided.

**Comment:** In this instance, the whole nation could see the pillar move from the Most Holy to

the front of the Tabernacle, to the door. The movement was like God saying, “Pay attention!”

**Reply:** Yes. Normally, when the pillar lifted and was absorbed in the main cloud above, the people knew it was time to move on. They were accustomed to having a sufficiency of time for packing their gear, disassembling the Tabernacle for transport, loading the boards on a wagon, and making other preparations for the journey. Then the pillar came down to give a sense of direction like a living compass, and the cloud started to move.

**Deut. 31:16** And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a-whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

**Comment:** How disappointing for Moses to hear this disobedience prophesied after working with the nation for 40 years in the wilderness and trying to get them to follow God’s leadings!

**Comment:** Since Joshua had just gotten his charge and the Lord was not giving a timetable for the disobedience, he must have felt deeply the responsibility of his charge.

**Reply:** Yes, especially with the news not being good.

When we study the different accounts of the cloud, we get the impression there was no visible format like arms or legs—just a column from which a voice emanated. We believe Moses and Joshua were kneeling before the 15-foot-wide door to the Holy with the pillar in the center over and between them. Now the pillar shifted to the post where Moses was so that when the voice spoke, it was known that Moses was being addressed. Normally when Moses presented himself during the 40 years, both he and the pillar were centered so that the people knew the instruction was particularly directed to him. But now, with Joshua and Moses both being there, the pillar shifted to show that God was speaking just to Moses. The message came to him, “Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.” The message continued, predicting that the gods of the strangers of the land would be so influential that they would eventually cause Israel to disobey and lead the nation to actually break their part of the covenant made at Mount Sinai.

**Comment:** This prophecy must have given Joshua great zeal to want to defeat the enemies as quickly and as thoroughly as possible when the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

**Reply:** Yes, subsequent details in the Book of Joshua bear out that thought. The Israelites were obedient all the days of Joshua. “And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel” (Josh. 24:31). However, not long after Joshua died, the Israelites became disobedient and started to go after strange gods.

Joshua’s leadership qualities were similar to those of Moses—perhaps not as great but similar in large measure—so that the people respected his leadership. Several times in the Book of Joshua, that respect was manifested not only for God but also for Joshua as a servant or leader. In some cases, it seemed that the people paid more respect to him than they had to Moses earlier, the reason being that the remnant who entered the land were a purified nation. Indeed the 2 million who entered the Promised Land were a lot different from the 2 million of the mixed multitude who left Egypt.

**Comment:** One evidence of the Israelites’ respect for Joshua was their remaining silent for six days while they marched around Jericho. They did not shout until he gave the signal on the seventh day.

**Reply:** Yes, that account is perhaps the most marked evidence of respect. To keep a multitude quiet, not uttering a sound, for at least eight hours for seven days as they marched in circuits around the city was remarkable. The only sound that could be heard was the blowing of the trumpets.

**Deut. 31:17** Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?

The evils and troubles would have to be great for the people to say, “Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?” Quite a lot of evil would be needed to break the stiffness of their necks (Exod. 32:9).

**Comment:** Actually the evils would have to go way down to Jacob’s Trouble.

**Reply:** Yes. As a people, the Jews are not paying much attention to God today despite all that they have suffered over thousands of years. In 1878, Jews returned to the land with euphoria and joy, but from the 1950s or so on, the calamities keep coming without bringing the nation to repentance like the city of Nineveh.

**Deut. 31:18** And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

Verses 16-18 are a prophecy of the people’s disobedience.

**Comment:** God hid Himself when He allowed enemies to be victorious in warfare. Outstanding examples are the Babylonian captivity and the Diaspora.

**Reply:** Yes, there were periods of defeat and captivity. In fact, the language of verse 18 is the language of the Diaspora. The Jews’ being scattered at that time is called the hiding of God’s face, that is, the turning of His face away from Israel.

**Deut. 31:19** Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

**Comment:** It is interesting that Moses had a song at the beginning of the 40 years and another song at the end of the 40 years (Exod. 15:1-19).

**Reply:** Moses’ second song is given in the next chapter.

The “song” was more of a dirge or a mournful ode—like prose put to music. The technique of using music with words is very helpful in assisting memory—more helpful than just the words alone. There seems to be a double witness.

**Deut. 31:20** For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

After God would bring the Israelites into the land and they had “eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat,” they would depart from the commands of His instruction (Deut. 32:15).

**Comment:** Prosperity would lead to disobedience.

**Reply:** Yes. During the Laodicean period in this country, we are being spoiled rotten. We have plenty of food, the comforts of life, abundant shelter, and Bibles and study helps. Percentage-wise, probably fewer Christians are making the high calling in this last stage of the Church because of the lack of outward persecutions and hardships, as well as the failure to appreciate God's gifts to us along temporal and spiritual lines. Christians are generally more faithful in times of leanness and outward persecution.

One reason the Harvest period is a little different from conditions down through the Gospel Age is that after many, many years of the Dark Ages and times of bondage came this period of liberty. The joy, exuberance, and eagerness were very productive initially, but that productivity was short-lived. As time went on, problems occurred and the results became more of a gleaning work than a harvest work.

Food and plenty are usually given as reasons for the corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezek. 16:49). However, sodomy and homosexuality also characterized Sodom and Gomorrah, and today the same conditions are prevalent. Except for only a handful of people, the whole city of Sodom was corrupt. For example, the men of the city demanded the two handsome young "men" (materialized angels) for familiar purposes (Gen. 19:1-5). When the minority become the majority, then "Sodom and Gomorrah" are reenacted. Thus fullness of bread can be a curse under certain circumstances.

The prophecy of verse 20 shows that a time period is needed for fullness of bread to cause corruption. Although the condition does not immediately occur, such is the tendency as time goes on. The same thing happened with the fall of Rome.

**Deut. 31:21** And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.

Even *that very day* some of the people were contemplating evil. In time, when this condition developed and evils and troubles befell the Israelites as a result, this song of Moses would "testify against them as a witness."

**Deut. 31:22** Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

How startling that Moses wrote this long song and taught it to the Israelites the same day! Verses 1-43 of the next chapter comprise the song. Moses would have written the song on a skin with a quill. He was skilled in all the wisdom of Egypt, and one of those skills was writing quickly on a skin with a quill. Also, to have this skill at the age of 120 shows that Moses was in the fullness of health with excellent motor skills. He wrote this lengthy song and taught it to the children of Israel the same day after speaking all the words of the previous chapters in Deuteronomy. Moses was a most unusual individual. Apparently, he was also a linguist, for he made known to the Israelites the hieroglyphs of Egypt. Thus he was a teacher in many different ways besides talking. And of course he was a general in Egypt during the first 40 years of his life.

**Q:** For a clarification, did Moses write the song the same day he gave the rest of the Book of

## Deuteronomy?

**A:** We believe he wrote the words of Deuteronomy—the blessing—previously but spoke them the same day. When people know they are going to die and thus have a time limitation, they write their wills. A blessing is sometimes likened to a will. For example, Pastor Russell wrote his will a year or two earlier, for he saw certain dangers with the Judge. To try to skirt the dangers, he made a lot of suggestions as to what to do at his demise. We think Moses did the same—he wrote his “will,” or blessing, earlier and then, knowing it by heart, spoke the words the same day that he wrote the song and taught it to the children of Israel.

Moses wrote the song after he was told he would die. A remarkably obedient servant, he did his best to emphasize the dangers of the future as revealed to him by God.

**Comment:** As a mediator, Moses loved the people so much that even when he knew he would die, he wanted to leave them with good instructions.

**Reply:** Yes, he was in sympathy with the people, and he faithfully used the words and the wisdom that God gave him. No wonder Satan wanted to get Moses’ body (Jude 9)!

**Deut. 31:23** **And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee.**

Joshua was the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). Speaking for God, Moses said to him, “For thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee.” While Moses was speaking in the first person, a “thus saith the LORD” is understood.

Particularly in Old Testament times, when the Holy Spirit operated on individual prophets who were speaking in a public fashion, the people could tell by the mannerism and perhaps even by the voice itself that God or the Logos was speaking through them. Not only may the voice have been megaphonic in its utterance, but when the prophets spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the people could tell by the volume and the tenor of the voice that they were speaking as an instrument of the Lord Himself.

Imagine Joshua’s reaction upon hearing the words Moses spoke: “Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee.” Joshua was no doubt strengthened.

**Q:** When the feet members are privileged to give their final, fatal witness at the end of the age, might not the power of the Holy Spirit operate similarly on them? It will be apparent that they are speaking a message from the Lord. Their voices will have a megaphonic effect and an inflection beyond what they could do in their natural ability.

**A:** Yes, that will be true for those feet members who speak before a large audience under an unusual circumstance. However, the feet members who speak before just two or even a handful of people will not be empowered that way.

**Deut. 31:24** **And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,**

The next two chapters of Deuteronomy, including the blessing on the tribes, were included in this statement. Not only was Moses finishing the words of chapter 31, but it is understood that

he was finishing chapters 32 and 33 as well. The reason for inserting the statement here is that in some respects, to put the statement later in the narrative would take away from the force of the content of those chapters. As the song was sung and the blessing was pronounced, they were complete in themselves without an addendum.

In any event, “writing the words of this law in a book” was a prodigious undertaking for Moses to accomplish in such a short space of time. Certainly he had to be in good health, including his eyesight and the strength in his hands for the penmanship.

**Q:** The King James margin has the word “inspiration,” suggesting that part of verse 24 could read, “When Moses had made an end of writing the *inspiration* of this law in a book.” Would the thought be of a “breathing out” of the Holy Spirit?

**A:** Yes.

**Deut. 31:25** That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,

**Deut. 31:26** Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

Moses commanded the Levites to put the book of the Law “in the side of the ark of the covenant.” When the Ark was constructed, there was some kind of appendage, or sheath, in which the scroll could be inserted. Consider the size of the Torah. When in a complete form, it is rather large—about 8 inches in diameter and 30 inches long. The Ark was rather small, being only 2.5 cubits (or 45 inches) long. Therefore, a separate sheath was strapped to the Ark to accommodate the carrying of this sizable scroll. When the Levites carried the Ark of the Covenant, it rested between their cheek and their right shoulder, and their hands were down near their belt when they carried the scroll. Also, a straight handle protruded from each end of the scroll. The handles facilitated the rolling open and the closing of the scroll.

Notice that the book of the Law was “a witness *against* thee [the Israelites],” not a witness “for and against” them. In His omniscience, God knew that during the preponderance of their history throughout the remainder of the Jewish Age, the nation would not be living close to Him. The few exceptions were times such as the days of Joshua, Hezekiah, and Josiah. For the bulk of their history, they were more or less estranged from God in one respect or another.

**Comment:** A similar statement was made in verse 19 with regard to the song Moses wrote. God said it would be “a witness for me against the children of Israel.” Both the song and the Law were a witness against the Israelites.

**Reply:** Yes, the song was basically a dirge.

**Comment:** Moses was talking here, not God. During the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses had protected the Israelites a number of times from God’s wrath. Having seen repeatedly just how stiff-necked and rebellious the people were, Moses knew that the emotional high of entering the land would not last long before they returned to disobedience.

**Reply:** On the one hand, God spoke very favorably of Israel in some instances, and on the other hand, we should always keep in mind that the Gentile nations have done no better. On the whole, nominal Christianity has behaved much like natural Israel. The great majority have made an outward show of obedience, sacrifice, and deference in praising God, but their private lives have been a contradiction. Therefore, if God’s Law had been given to the Gentiles, they

would have done no better. Remembering this thought helps to balance the actions of the nation of Israel. When their trait of being stiff-necked is converted, when true repentance comes, it will strike deep into their very being.

**Deut. 31:27** For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?

“While I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?” What strong words! After the obedience of the nation under Joshua, conditions would change radically.

**Comment:** One indiscretion of Moses, who was a giant by comparison, prevented him from entering the Promised Land, yet the entire rebellious and stiff-necked nation got to enter.

**Reply:** We naturally think along those lines. However, a modifying factor is that Moses’ action on that one occasion was intended to be a type. As shown a little earlier, just as our judgment on natural Israel’s behavioral actions is modified by bringing in the Gentiles, so it seems that God judged Moses very harshly for his attitude in smiting the rock to bring forth water, but the type is of great importance. The inconvenience that Moses experienced in not entering the land was not sufficient to offset the necessity for showing that Second Death is the destiny of those who willfully disobey God’s covenant.

**Comment:** Joshua 24:19-25 is pertinent. “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.”

**Reply:** When the Law was originally given at Mount Sinai, the Israelites promised to obey the words of Jehovah, but they wanted Moses to do the talking, for they could not stand the strength of Jehovah’s voice.

**Comment:** Likewise, consecration in the Gospel Age is to be a sober choice. We are to sit down first and count the cost. Hastily jumping into the agreement, which says in effect, “All these things we will do,” just brings condemnation to those who are not willing to follow through on their promise.

**Reply:** Yes. At evangelistic crusades, religious leaders try to emotionally stir up those in the audience to make an immediate response, commitment, and/or vow that involves the remainder of their lives. Instead the matter should be considered soberly and carefully. Of course the other extreme is not good either, for those who think too long on the subject generally never make a positive decision. As a general rule, if individuals who wholly commit themselves to the Lord keep His promises in mind, render obedience to the best of their ability, and ask forgiveness when they come short, the Lord’s strength will be with them and will overrule so that they come to a successful conclusion. In advising one to count the cost, Jesus was not trying to discourage consecration but just wanted individuals to consider (and answer) the step with sobriety, thought, and the realization that it was a lifetime commitment. No one should feel it is permissible to have a change of mind at a later date. Consecration is a simple

and straightforward step—for life.

**Deut. 31:28** Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.

Verse 28 makes more sense when we go back to verses 25 and 26: “Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.” The Levites had been listening to Moses. Now he would address “all the elders ... [and] officers” of the 12 tribes. He wanted to “speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record [witness—RSV] against them.”

Moses’ speaking was like talking in the presence of a stone as a witness. In this case, he was calling “heaven” above and the “earth” below to be a witness. Normally we would think of an audience of spirit beings in the heavens and of the people down here, but Moses’ dramatic and impressive actions were like addressing the atmosphere and the ground. His unique form of address helped to sear the words into the people’s memories.

**Deut. 31:29** For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

**Comment:** The “work” of their hands was the worship of false gods and making images and statues, so the epitome of their utter corruption was turning away from the great Jehovah after all He had done for them. Isaiah 44:9-18 and Jeremiah 10:1-15 are good references.

**Reply:** Yes, in time, the Israelites prayed to dumb idols, to objects made with their own hands.

**Comment:** The term “latter days” refers to the time leading up to the Babylonian captivity.

**Reply:** Yes. It also somewhat applies to the end of the Jewish Age in AD 69-70. At least in principle, the term can also apply to the judgment coming on the nation in Jacob’s Trouble, yet future, when only the Holy Remnant will be delivered. At present, we do not see the nation turning to God, for the secular government of Israel looks to the United States and other nations for help. The term “latter days” seems to suggest that the evil will be even more egregious in Israel in the near future.

**Comment:** Ezekiel 37, the chapter about the valley of dry bones, shows that the bones have come together, but there will be no breath until the four winds of trouble breathe upon them. At that time, the Holy Remnant will look to God for help and will mourn for Jesus as for an only son (Zech. 12:10).

**Reply:** Yes, great trouble will be needed to wake them up.

**Deut. 31:30** And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

This last verse of chapter 31 should really be a superscription for the next chapter to introduce Moses’ song. Chapter 31 is separate and distinct from the next chapter.

**Deut. 32:1** Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.



Moses' song started with four verses of beautiful, exquisite language and illustrations.

**Comment:** Moses stood up and sang this song to the entire nation. For everyone to be able to hear the words—all 2 million people—means his voice was supernaturally strengthened.

**Reply:** Yes. The music, the presentation of the song, and the choice of words in verses 1-4 were all exquisite. This introduction was marvelous.

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.” Moses addressed the heavens and the earth as singular personages. He was saying, “Pay attention, O ye heavens; hear, O earth, what I am about to say.” Although 120 years old, Moses was in fine physical condition.

**Deut. 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:**

Moses compared his doctrine to rain and his speech to dew. Stated another way, he contrasted rain and dew, and doctrine and speech. His *doctrine* would drop as the *rain* and be like *showers* on the grass. His *speech* would distill as *dew* and be like “*small rain*” on the tender herb.

**Comment:** Moses was saying that his doctrine and speech were *life-giving*, just as the showers are to the grass and the small rain is to the tender herb, respectively.

**Reply:** Yes, that is one perspective. As doctrine is heavier than speech, so rain is heavier than dew. For example, whenever Jesus spoke or gave a sermon, his statements were good on the surface and were usually kept in memory, but because of the depth of his wisdom, the secondary deeper doctrinal aspect was more important. Doctrine was the core of his speech; it was the meaning in back of his words; it was more plentiful and abundant. Part of a hymn is, “As pants the hart for water brooks, so pants my soul for thee.” The hungry Christian feels that he cannot get enough of God's Word, the rain, whereas those without that same depth of devotion and consecration are satisfied with the dew. To put the matter another way, doctrine is strong meat for adults, and dew is more for babes, for those of tender age and development. With Moses' speaking one way and then reversing the sequence, the music of this introduction was elevating with transcendent and beautiful thoughts.

**Comment:** Jesus' teaching is profitable for both the grass and the tender herb.

**Reply:** The hope is that the grass will become a tree, a fully mature Christian crystallized in Christlikeness. Thus the stages of development are herb, grass, and tree. Of course a tree can also be firmly established in error. The introduction of this song helps us to get a spiritual vocabulary.

**Deut. 32:3 Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.**

Not only is Jehovah great, but even His name is holy. He is “the high and lofty One” (Isa. 57:15).

**Deut. 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**

**Comment:** The words of verse 4 are so full of goodness that it is hard to see how a false concept of love is so prevalent with some today even in present-truth circles.

**Reply:** Although the “some” may not be a majority, they are quite vocal. However, a sufficient number of brethren do not see that justice is the foundation of God’s throne and character and instead put love first. *Natural* love and *natural* faith precede *spiritual* love and faith. And *spiritual* faith, which comes first, is needed to develop *spiritual* love. Peter said, “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness [finally] charity [love]” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Similarly, the progression is faith, hope, and love, the greatest being love (1 Cor. 13:13). While Paul spoke of faith as fading away and of love as being everlasting, Peter gave a different twist; namely, faith and the other qualities *continue*, and the *sum total* of all of them *is love*. In other words, the desire or object is the addition and the continuance of all of the qualities. Thus *spiritual* faith abides forever, whereas *natural* faith ceases, for *natural* faith is based on natural observations, that is, according to the sight of the eye. For example, as we behold the beauty and the magnitude of the heavens, we use natural reasoning to conclude that a Great Being must have created them. When we consecrate and get the Holy Spirit, our reasoning is on a different level. Paul was not contradicting Peter, for the two apostles were simply giving different perspectives. The end of the commandment is love, but one must also have a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere and undissembled faith (1 Tim. 1:5). Notice that *spiritual* faith is in that text; only *natural* faith passes away. As Christians, we need to think more on the comparisons in God’s Word. The astounding depth of the Scriptures keeps us humble. Even when we are old-timers, we have a lot to learn.

**Comment:** In the *Sermon Book* is a subheading “Justice First, Then Love.” The Pastor said the dear friends would do well to remember that justice is the foundation of God’s throne, yet the attitude of some is that love trumps all.

Jehovah is “*the Rock*,” and Jesus is “*a Rock*.” Thus God likens Himself to a strong and stable *rock* foundation. “All his ways are judgment”; that is, He does not act without thinking out a matter in advance. Whatever He does carries with it a tremendous weight of understanding and harmony with the attributes of His being.

The introduction to Moses’ song is mind-boggling with its cadence and power. God’s work is perfect, His ways are judgment, He is a God of truth, He is without iniquity, and He is just and right. Moses subsequently went into the disappointments of God’s subjects and their poor situation and need.

**Deut. 32:5** They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

The Israelites “have corrupted themselves.” Moses was emphasizing, “Do not blame the corruption on the parents and the grandparents but on yourselves.” “Their spot [blemish] is not the spot of his [Jacob’s] children”; that is, their blemish was not of their forefathers but of themselves. “They are a perverse and crooked generation.” Verse 5 introduces the thought in subsequent verses.

**Deut. 32:6** Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Israel’s “father,” Jehovah, had “bought,” “made,” and “established” them.

**Deut. 32:7** Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

Moses' continuing mode was family-oriented: "Ask thy father, and ... thy elders, and they will tell thee." The tongue-lashing continued.

**Deut. 32:8** When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

**Comment:** God set the bounds of the people long before the 40 years in the wilderness.

**Reply:** When God created Adam, He had a number of things in mind. For example, He chose the land of Israel as a unique location, for it is the land bridge of three continents. Moses was saying, "Look at the land God has promised you with all of its potential, yet you do not even recognize that He is dealing with you. You are a corrupt and stiff-necked generation with wax in your ears. All you have to do is to go to your religious instructors and your elders." Moses made this last point because under the covenant, the parents were required to educate their children in the Law. In addition, the Law was to be read to the nation every seven years. Thus there was no excuse for disobedience, for the younger generation was told by their parents, their elders, the Levites, and the reading of the Law every seven years. Starting with verse 5, Moses was giving a tongue-lashing. He asked rhetorical questions but did not stop for an answer, which was yes.

**Comment:** Abraham was told that the people would wander and then come out in the fourth generation. The bounds were preset.

**Reply:** The Hebrew brings out that lines were used for the land allotment of even Israel itself. While among all the nations of earth Israel had a unique spot as a land bridge, the land had been surveyed, as it were, so that the various tribes knew their boundaries. Moses was telling the Israelites that God had line upon line of instruction of every kind and various means for educating them, so they were without excuse for their disobedience. They could not say, "Why didn't you tell us?" for God had informed them throughout the Pentateuch, which extended from Genesis through the history of the nation thus far and included prophecies of the future.

In essence, then, the song of Moses was a tongue-lashing. The first four verses were very pleasant, but a dirge followed with the exception of only a few lines of hope.

**Deut. 32:9** For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Moses was now in a religious mode. Just as Levi was separated out from among the other tribes to be Jehovah's particular tribe, so even the nation was God's inheritance.

Still Moses did not pause for an answer but continued with strong talk. He was showing that God Himself was dealing with the Israelites—didn't they have any respect for their Creator, who had made them and shown so much favor? The strong language was designed to sear the nation's conscience so that when future generations learned this song, they could not talk back or refute it.

**Deut. 32:10** He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

God led Jacob (the nation of Israel) about in the wilderness for 40 years, which were now ending. Moses reviewed the nation's past history and was now coming up to the present tense, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land.

**Deut. 32:11** As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

**Deut. 32:12** So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

God *alone* had led the nation, which was still being referred to in the singular as “Jacob.” As told to Abraham and passed down to Isaac, the promise was given to Jacob personally and applied to his lineage, his seed. From now on, after Moses’ decease, the nation would be under the leadership of Joshua. When Moses rehearsed this song before the 2 million Israelites, it was necessary, in spite of his megaphonic voice, for Joshua to be doing the same thing. Moses, who knew this song by heart, had written it beforehand and given a copy to Joshua. At the same time, they both rehearsed it to the nation, so the people were without excuse—they heard the song loudly and clearly with proper enunciation!

Verses 11 and 12 describe what God did for Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. He bore them from place to place, provided manna from heaven, sent quail, and furnished water from the rock on two different occasions. God performed many miracles on their behalf, likening the miracles and the Israelites’ need at critical junctures to the way a mother eagle provides for her young. She stirs up the nest and removes the soft, downy part so that the thorns underneath are exposed, making the nest more and more uncomfortable. And so Israel longed more and more for the land that had been promised to them. Their experiences should have produced in them a character that was pleasing to the Lord. The older generation had already perished, and Moses’ tongue-lashing to the younger generation was effective for a number of years before it wore off and the perverse mode or genetic code that was in the older generation again surfaced. Remember, a *mixed* multitude had left Egypt and even accompanied the Israelites into the Promised Land, although the seven heathen nations that occupied the land at the time of entry were the chief problem, with the influence of the Amorites predominating.

God opened the Red Sea for the nation and guided and led them. Sometimes the Logos, the “angel” of Jehovah, was operative, and at other times, God Himself was the operative agent.

“The LORD alone did lead” them. He provided for the Israelites in the wilderness by keeping the leather of their shoes from wearing out, by furnishing manna to eat, etc. “There was no strange god with him [Jacob]” except for the daughters of Moab at the end of the 40 years. By following Balaam’s advice, they were successful in seducing some of the Israelites, thus causing a further weeding out of the last members of the older generation except for Joshua and Caleb.

**Deut. 32:13** He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;

Now the song of Moses was entering a prophetic mode. The land is rich in natural resources, many of which have not yet been tapped. Moses prophesied that God “made him [Jacob] to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.” In less fertile lands, bees usually go into holes in the rock—that is, they go into caves—to make their hives or nests. These provisions are inherent in the land itself, just as oil is deep below the land surface in Israel. Supposedly, the only place in the Middle East without oil is Israel, but the prophecy states, “Let Asher ... dip his foot in oil” (Deut. 33:24). “Flinty rock” signifies that oil is in the harder, deeper reserve of the rock. Drills can now go down several miles into the ground to obtain oil.

**Comment:** Two different Hebrew words are used for “rock” in verse 13. The rock with the honey is high and craggy, whereas the flinty rock is deeper and harder.

**Reply:** Yes. Sometimes a basalt crust holds in the oil, and of course oil is much deeper in the

ground than water.

**Deut. 32:14** Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

All of these blessings occurred during the Period of the Kings, when sheep, rams, and goats were in great abundance. The abundance went from a more distant past, to a current past, to the present briefly, and into the future. Thus God was covering their history—past, present, and future—to show what His promises entail. Knowing the end from the beginning, He sees the future as the present, and sometimes He even sees the future as the past. In other words, God possesses a unique prescience, whereby He can foretell the future with unerring accuracy. Angels can prophesy the future to some extent, but Jehovah does so with an unfailing accuracy that goes much deeper into the future than any angel is capable of doing.

**Comment:** God provided richly for the nation of Israel. In antitype, He provides abundantly for spiritual Israel.

**Reply:** Yes, that is the inference, although we cannot particularize the spiritual blessings from the type. In general, how rich is our inheritance! The gospel Church, which includes both Jews and Gentiles, is called the Israel of God.

**Deut. 32:15** But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

The fulfillment of this prophecy was future from Moses' day, for the Israelites had not yet entered the Land of Promise. Moses was telling that not only would the nation prosper temporally, but also they would disobey grossly—to the point where God would destroy their national polity in 606 BC and AD 69-70.

**Comment:** Isaiah 44:2 reads, "Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen."

**Reply:** All scholars generally agree that the word "Jeshurun," or "Jesurun," somehow refers to the nation of Israel. However, there are many different applications in the detailed explanation of the word.

**Comment:** The pet name Jeshurun means "upright one." When God formed Israel as a nation, the people were upright, but when they "waxed fat" with prosperity, they forsook Him, the Rock of their salvation.

**Reply:** Chapter 32 is called the "song of Moses," and the Hebrew for "Jeshurun" blends in with a musical connotation. This nomenclature was used to describe Israel. We will not go into the root meaning of the word, for there is too much back-and-forth reasoning. The name is used in fragmentary form in other parts of the Old Testament. Generally speaking, all scholars agree that the name refers to Israel, so we will leave the matter there, rather than go into the semantics of the word itself.

The terminology "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked" reminds us of a heifer. When we milked cows many years ago, one particular heifer was known for kicking and its ornery disposition.

Verse 15 uses a *futuristic* present tense. God was speaking to Israel, through Moses, of the future as though it were then a present condition. A new and obedient generation of the nation was just about to enter the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and undergoing many trials. Later, after the days of Joshua, the nation kicked. After the people grew thick “with fatness,” they forsook God, who had made them, and “lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation.” Among other things, they persecuted and slandered God’s true prophets.

*Jehovah* is “the Rock” of Israel’s salvation. However, Moses’ speaking to *natural* Israel should be kept distinct from *spiritual* Israel because *Jesus* is the Christian’s “Rock” in the wilderness, whereas *God* is the Israelites’ guiding light. It is true that most of the time, *Jesus*, as the *Logos*, was in the pillar of the cloud, leading the nation in the wilderness, but as the *representative* of the Father, he was following God’s directions as to where to lead the Israelites. *Jesus* was God’s spokesperson. Paul said everything that happened to Israel was for our benefit. “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). Israel was used during the Jewish Age to prefigure the experiences and the testings of the spiritual Church in the Gospel Age.

Why was the word “Rock” used in the wilderness? In regard to God’s workmanship in us, *Jesus* said that we are to build upon a rock and not upon sand (Matt. 7:24-27). In the wilderness, a rock is a lot different than sand, which blows around and is unstable. A rock, being in a fixed position of stability and firmness, is a wonderful refuge, shelter, and shield from wind, scorching sun, and enemies. To us that “rock” is the truth, without which we would wander aimlessly, having no perspective. The same Hebrew word *tsur*, translated “Rock,” is used six other times in the song of Moses (verses 4, 13, 18, 30, 31, and 37).

**Comment:** A number of Psalms connect the word “Rock” to *Jehovah* and salvation, explaining His purpose and characteristics. Two examples follow: “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psa. 18:2). “He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.... In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God” (Psa. 62:2,7).

**Reply:** God was natural Israel’s “Rock” of salvation. In the Psalms, the word “Rock” is used in various ways. Both God and *Jesus* are shown as our *personal* Rock. There is also the *group* perspective, namely, that Christ is the Rock upon whom the Church is founded.

**Comment:** The firmness and stability of a rock suggest that God will fulfill what He promises. He changes not.

**Deut. 32:16** They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

Israel provoked God to jealousy with strange gods and to anger with abominations. What is amazing about the nation’s use of idols is that the idols were so unattractive. For example, the heads of the Canaanite gods were so disproportionate to the size of the body that they appeared monstrous and vulgar—and that was true even of tiny idols. We wonder how people could (and can) be attracted by such things that cannot speak or walk, yet they consult these dumb idols to find out how to conduct their lives. In the great future, mankind will look back and be amazed at how far they strayed from the Creator. They will then realize how much they need to stick to Him as their guiding light in all affairs of life.

Not only were the strange gods abhorrent but the practices of the people with those gods were

abominable. Fertility worship was practiced along various lines, usually up on hills under the shade of trees where sins were done privately. This type of false worship was the primitive form of what later became the vestal virgin worship of Rome. The song of Moses prophesied that Israel would commit all these sins when they entered the land. This song followed a very simple style of music usually called Gregorian chants, which used as few as three notes.

**Deut. 32:17** They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

The Israelites would sacrifice “unto devils,” unto “gods whom they knew not” in the wilderness, and unto “new gods.” In what sense did their “fathers” not fear these “new gods”? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who did not worship such gods, had no reverential fear of them. It was bad enough to have Baal along with Jehovah, but Israel was not satisfied with just one false god, so they added a god of agriculture, a god of fertility, a god of health, etc. The multiplicity of gods was an even worse condition. With only two—the true Jehovah and the false Baal—it was easier for the people to make a distinction between good and evil. The very multiplicity of false gods made their usage so common that the people were not as shocked, and false gods became a way of life.

**Deut. 32:18** Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

The Israelites would forget God, who had begotten, formed, and nurtured them and wrought wondrous miracles and deliverances on their behalf. Here God was pictured as the Father of natural Israel. In later books of the Bible, He frequently regarded Himself as their Husband. Either way the term can be misunderstood unless it is kept in mind that there is a vast difference between God’s relationship to natural Israel and Jesus’ relationship with the Church. God was the Husband of the *nation*, of the people *as a whole*, whereas Jesus has a *personal, or individual*, relationship with each Christian. Every Christian is given a special personal name, as well as a group relationship to Jesus (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). God’s relationship to natural Israel is very honorable, but it is not on the same level of camaraderie as that with the Church.

The same principle applies to John 3:16, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God does not love the world more than the Church. There are two different perspectives. He found the *nation* of Israel as a little babe in the wilderness, and He cared for and nurtured them, bearing them *as a whole* on eagles’ wings. Later He said that He married the nation.

**Deut. 32:19** And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.

God was still thinking of the nation collectively but now brought in the feminine gender. The Old Testament makes a big distinction between male and female, but God has an interest in both genders. For a woman living back there, the inclusion of the term “daughters” was very helpful. Women were included in spite of the fact that prohibitions existed in real life. God was interested in *everyone* as a whole. Individuals were another matter, for God did not marry Noah or Samuel or Daniel, for example.

**Deut. 32:20** And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.

This strong language pertained to a time future from Moses’ day. The tongue-lashing was given in advance, telling that the nation would develop into this condition. Moses wanted the

people to hear this prophecy so that when it was fulfilled, they would know they had been forewarned. It would be impossible to know God as a God of love without the permission of evil. Otherwise, the words would lack meaning. The temporary permission of evil is the best arrangement that could have happened to reveal the love of God and Christ for the world, individuals, and the consecrated. “Choose *life*” (not death) is the option for every individual who has ever lived (Deut. 30:19). God is catering to free will.

**Comment:** Jeremiah talks about the consequences when God hides His face. “I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity” (Jer. 18:17).

**Reply:** Yes, God hid His face in the Diaspora, scattering the nation like the wind. The meaning of the word “Diaspora” is like the scattering of seed, for *spora* means “seed.” God turned His back on Israel by scattering the Jews among the Gentile nations.

**Deut. 32:21** They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Here is a prophecy way back in Deuteronomy that God would turn His favor to the Gentiles. Romans 10:19-21 reads, “But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

**Deut. 32:22** For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Fire and burning to the “lowest hell,” depth, or pit are associated with God’s anger. Verse 22 reminds us of an earthquake with molten lava that produces fire and causes a destructive shaking. In speaking about the end times, the Apostle Peter said that the spiritual heavens and the civil earth—the whole cosmos, or order of society and civilization as we know it—will be changed and replaced by the Kingdom, a firmer and more stable foundation (2 Pet. 3:7).

**Comment:** Those who believe in a burning hell love verse 22 because it speaks of not only fire but also the “lowest hell,” giving them the concept of different levels of torture. Contextually, we can prove that the fire is symbolic because verse 24 talks about being burned with hunger.

**Reply:** Yes. A more common proof text is Zephaniah 3:8,9. “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”

**Deut. 32:23** I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.

**Deut. 32:24** They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.

**Deut. 32:25** The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the



virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

**Deut. 32:26** I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:

Moses' scathing remarks assumed that the Israelites would not obey. What could be worse? As a nation, Israel would experience every kind of problem because of not hearkening strictly to the Lord's commandments. God would "heap mischiefs" and spend His "arrows upon them," as listed in subsequent verses. The Israelites would be "burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction." God would send the "teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents [or scorpions] of the dust." All segments of human society would be affected: man, woman, and child, the old and the young.

When we consider verses 23 and 25 together, the "arrows" are without, and the "terror" is within. Regardless of age or sex, whether the Israelites were out in public or inside in shelter, the trouble would reach them. God would execute punishments for their disobedience.

**Q:** Did these punishments occur leading up to the Diaspora?

**A:** Yes, we think so. The Israelites had all of these problems but did not make the connection that the troubles were happening because of disobedience. Finally, the Temple and the city of Jerusalem were attacked, and the people were displaced from the nation itself. The Israelites forgot all the miracles God had done for them. They obeyed for a month, a year, and possibly a second year, but their history consisted of repeated disobedience because they did not stay focused on the Law, God's Word. They needed Scriptures on their doorposts, on their walls, on the hems of their garments, etc., to remember to read, study, pray, and meditate. When the sabbath day came, they were to take time for sacred study and worship. The prophetic detail of the punishments for disobedience is remarkable. Repercussions would come upon the Israelites if they did not hearken to God's instructions.

Sometimes the mind gets fatigued with a lot of detail and study. There is a difference between (1) backing off and viewing the situation as a whole and (2) investigating every tree in the forest. At times, it is necessary to back off temporarily, but exigencies occur where it becomes obvious that further study would be helpful. In the latter case, one should heed the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

In Leviticus 26, God said a number of times that He would punish the Israelites "seven times" if they disobeyed. Finally the seven times of punishment came, covering 2,520 years from 606 BC to AD 1914. During that long period of time, the Jews were harshly treated, displaced from their homes, and kept in servitude to the enemy, as it were.

God said He would "scatter them into [the four] corners" of the earth and "make the remembrance of them to cease [as a nation] from among men." In other words, He would scatter the Israelites abroad throughout the earth. Wherever they would be displaced in foreign lands, they would have plenty of discomfiture and bondage.

**Deut. 32:27** Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.

"Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy ... lest they [the enemy] should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this." As Moses' song continued, he was now speaking for himself. He composed the song to a simple melody for the sake of memory. However,

unless the Israelites made the song like a daily manna or intonation or frequently read it, they would soon forget. Nevertheless, they were without excuse, for the written instruction of the song was available to them. The problem was that they viewed the calamities as happenstance and did not attribute them to punishment for wrongdoing.

**Comment:** To this day, the Jews feel they are persecuted unjustly—whether in the Holocaust or in the current Arab situation. Being secular-minded, they do not make the connection.

**Reply:** Yes, they feel that they have been unjustly treated by their enemies.

**Deut. 32:28** For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.

We are reminded of Isaiah 1:3, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” In some instances, beasts know more than humans, who are supposed to have understanding. The more one departs from the way of the Lord’s counsel, the more corrupt and dark his reasoning and understanding become.

**Deut. 32:29** O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

**Comment:** In principle, verse 29 is like Matthew 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

**Reply:** We are also reminded of the text “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12). In other words, our life on earth is short, and we do not have much time. With the hope set before the faithful, the time gets shorter every day. Hence we should be more diligent in redeeming the time and numbering our days.

**Deut. 32:30** How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

If the Israelites did not hearken to God, one of the enemy would chase 1,000, and two of the enemy would put 10,000 to flight. “Except their [Israel’s] Rock [Jehovah] had sold [forsaken] them [when the enemy prevailed], and the LORD had shut them up?”

**Deut. 32:31** For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

The “rock” of the enemy is compared with the “Rock” of Israel. Thus the same Hebrew word can be both a blessing and a curse. The context determines the meaning.

**Deut. 32:32** For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorra: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:

When crops were grown for food, a lot of seed would produce puny results. Because of the Israelites’ disobedience, God would discomfit them in multiple ways. They got enough food to survive, but they did not see the withholding of abundant crops as a punishment. Instead they blamed the lack of fruitage on the weather, the soil, or another factor—they blamed their meager crops on anything but God’s providence.

The grapes were bitter (like “gall”) at times and could not be counted on for consistency year after year. In regard to wine making, the same variety of grapes can have a different taste

under various climatic or soil conditions.

**Deut. 32:33** Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.

Spiritually speaking, “wine” pictures “doctrine.” From a positive standpoint, when grape juice is slightly fermented and hence becomes “wine,” we say it represents the joys, the exhilaration, of the truth. Here the doctrines were harmful.

**Deut. 32:34** Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?

Jehovah was speaking in Moses’ song through the overruling of the Holy Spirit. The same principle operated the reverse way in the Book of Revelation. John was speaking according to the power of the Holy Spirit and then occasionally introduced his own “Amen!” To prevent these exclamations would have robbed him of the joy. Thus the Holy Spirit sometimes allows our spirit to interrupt.

**Deut. 32:35** To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

“To me [God] belongeth vengeance, and recompence.” “Their [Israel’s] foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand.”

**Deut. 32:36** For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

**Deut. 32:37** And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,

**Q:** Do verses 36 and 37 apply to the time, yet future, when the Holy Remnant will be recognized?

**A:** That would be true in principle, but there are various “holy remnants.” We usually think of the Holy Remnant in Jacob’s Trouble, but there was also a “holy remnant” when the Jews were taken captive to Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 52:28-30). Millions of Jews perished, and only a few hundred of the nation survived for transport to Babylon. God overruled with regard to who comprised that remnant. As a result, when Christ came at his First Advent, a people, a remnant, were prepared for his name (Luke 1:17). The holy seed was in that remnant. Even though the remnant grew and was reduced to another remnant, not only was the seed of the Jewish race preserved but also a faith element among that seed, if not all of the seed.

**Comment:** Verse 36 reads as follows in the New Revised Standard: “Indeed the LORD will vindicate his people, have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, neither bond nor free remaining.”

Before proceeding, we would like to make a few remarks. The song of Moses starts and ends on a good note, and all of the verses in between are a righteous, scathing criticism of the behavior of the nation of Israel. However, some of the verses might seem contradictory to the setting when Moses gave this song just before the entrance of the nation into the Promised Land. Therefore, we need to understand that this chapter is not a detailed description of Israel’s disobedience during the 40 years in the wilderness but a prophecy of what would happen subsequent to their entry into the land with all their disobedient acts. For example, verse 12 reads, “So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Of the 40 years, only when the Israelites first entered the wilderness did they worship a “strange god.” That incident occurred when Moses was up in the mount and the people made and worshipped

the golden calf, that is, the bull, the god of Egypt. Subsequently, every act of disobedience during the 40 years received a punishment. During that time, God tutored the nation, having warned them in advance that He would prove them, to see whether they really loved Him, as they had said (Deut. 8:2).

When Moses was the mediator, there was retribution. He kept matters relatively in hand because God was with him and blessed him by having angelic powers perform miracles such as sending quail and causing fiery serpents to bite the people. In the final analysis, however, Moses was unsuccessful as a mediator except for being a type of Jesus, for the entire older generation perished except for Joshua and Caleb. While Moses and Joshua were on the scene, there was relative obedience, but starting with the Period of the Judges, the prophesied sins began to occur.

Verses 1-4, the introduction to the song of Moses, praise God and vindicate His character as a righteous God of truth and judgment. Verse 5 mentions that the Israelites would corrupt themselves. Then the song goes into a prophetic mode, telling of the corruptions that would occur after Joshua's day. Verses 6-11 describe how much God favored natural Israel. When He planned the earth and divided to the other nations their inheritance, He chose a special place for His people, Israel. In verse 12, God talked of the time when Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years and He alone did lead them; that is, there was no interference, particularly when the Tabernacle was finished after the first year in the wilderness and the Israelites started their journey with the pillar of the cloud leading them. Verses 13-22 go into prophetic detail about how Israel provoked God to jealousy after Joshua's day by sacrificing to strange gods and devils. Moses used the past tense because God sees the future as the present and even as the past. In verses 23-42, God said that in view of the nation's various acts of disobedience, which He called "mischief," He would bring judgments. Verse 43, the end of Moses' song, finishes on the happy note of the inauguration of the Kingdom. All of the other nations will be blessed, but the nation of Israel will be blessed in a special sense from a natural standpoint.

**Deut. 32:38** Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

**Deut. 32:39** See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

**Deut. 32:40** For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

**Deut. 32:41** If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.

**Deut. 32:42** I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Verses 38-42 describe things that would happen in the future and what God would do. In the Period of the Judges, He wounded Israel for disobedience and then healed the nation. When disobedience occurred again, He allowed Israel to be taken captive. When the people cried out to Him for mercy, He raised up a judge to deliver them. This cycle continued for 450 years and on into the Period of the Kings.

Verse 38 refers to the time after Joshua's day when Israelites ate "the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings." God continued prophetically, "Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection." As individuals, the people sinned in this manner on the

mountains of Israel and even erected idols or altars on their private property. As a nation, they were guilty of these sins at the time of Jeroboam. When he was made the head of the ten tribes, he established rival services and worship at Beth-el to keep the people from going to Jerusalem. Thus the loyalty of the Israelites was tested. Those who disobeyed Jeroboam were correspondingly punished. There are some parallels with what has happened to the Christian Church during the Gospel Age and even during the Harvest period. For example, nearby conventions were intentionally held on the same day as a test of loyalty.

God continued to speak in the song: “See now that *I*, even *I*, am he, and there is no god with me: *I* kill, and *I* make alive; *I* wound, and *I* heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.”

Still God spoke prophetically: “For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.” Faith can grasp this statement as an anchor to know that God will visit vengeance on His enemies, even though we live at a time when He is allowing evil to flourish. In His own due time, He will render the proper judgment. Those who have faith in God hang on such promises.

Why did God describe His sword of judgment as “glittering”? From a pragmatic standpoint, a glittering sword would be very obvious judgment. The judgments to come—that is, future to Moses’ day—would be seen not just as natural phenomena but as *God-directed* judgments. Examples of such self-evident manifestations of *divine* indignation and judgment were the Flood of Noah’s day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 606 BC and again in AD 69-70. God’s indignation against corrupt behavior has been (and will be) obvious in such harsh judgments—in the world before the Flood, in the Jewish Age, in the Gospel Age, and in the Kingdom Age.

**Comment:** The Hebrew word for “glittering” is *baraq*, which is also translated “lightning,” so that word also indicates the swiftness of the punishment when God rises up to the prey.

**Comment:** The Hebrew word translated “whet” can mean “point.” God pointed his sword to the object of His judgment.

**Reply:** Also, to “whet” a sword means to “sharpen” it. A sword can be polished with an abrasive and then wiped with a soft cloth in order to bring out the sheen and cause it to glitter.

Whatever God says is concise and to the point and is beautifully expressed with a depth that we can only partially grasp. Jesus, too, used an economy of words, showing the wisdom he learned from his association with the Father for such a long period of time.

The statement “I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me” is encouraging because otherwise, if God is not going to be successful, what would be the purpose of consecration? Our hope and trust in Him is that He will be victorious.

“I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.” Verse 42 is a reference to the great Time of Trouble yet future. The occurrences in Jacob’s Trouble, described as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” will be mind-boggling (Dan. 12:1).

**Deut. 32:43** Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land,

**and to his people.**

Verse 43 is a natural sequel to verse 42, which pictures the real Time of Trouble. Out of the trouble will come wonderful blessings, but first, the trouble has to do its work.

**Deut. 32:44 And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.**

Hoshea is Joshua, who is a picture of Jesus.

**Deut. 32:45 And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:**

**Deut. 32:46 And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.**

**Q:** Is verse 46 a clue that Moses gave much of the Book of Deuteronomy on the same day that he rehearsed the song in the ears of the people?

**A:** Yes, Moses spoke for many hours. Similarly, most of the Book of Leviticus covers only a few days.

Moses said, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day." In other words, "What I am saying is your very life." The lesson for us, as Christians, is to keep ourselves submerged in the truth and our consecration because our very existence depends upon our obedience. Our efforts to do God's will in the present life determine what our future will be as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

**Deut. 32:47 For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.**

Moses was saying that by obedience, Israel would prolong its days as a nation. The principle was also true of individuals. As a reward for a sincere effort in trying to keep God's Law in Old Testament times, a person prolonged his days. An example is King Hezekiah, whose life was extended (2 Kings 20:5,6).

**Deut. 32:48 And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying,**

**Deut. 32:49 Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession:**

**Deut. 32:50 And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:**

**Deut. 32:51 Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.**

**Deut. 32:52 Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.**

Moses could not enter the Promised Land because of what he said at the waters of Meribah

when he smote the rock: “Hear now, ye rebels; must we [God and I] fetch you water out of this rock?” (Num. 20:10). In spite of this indiscreet act, Moses was considered “faithful in all his house” and will be one of the top Ancient Worthies (Heb. 3:2). Being imperfect, we all have done misdeeds. However, in smiting the rock in this manner, Moses pictures the Second Death class who smite, or crucify, Christ afresh; that is, they deny the Ransom in one way or another, thus sinning against the Holy Spirit. Some of this class indirectly undercut the Ransom through wrong doctrine. Others directly deny the Ransom. Still others deny the Ransom by immoral behavior. In addition, Moses’ not entering the Promised Land can also apply to a favorable aspect of the Christian, for it shows that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50).

Abarim is the mountain range that goes north and south on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, and Mount Nebo is the particular peak from which Moses was to view the Promised Land. On a clear day, which rarely happens, one can see a tremendous distance from that vantage point, even to the Mediterranean Sea. The heat of the desert land below usually creates a haze that obscures long distances.

Most commentaries say the pronoun “we” in Moses’ remark, “Must we fetch you water out of the rock?” refers to Moses and Aaron. However, we believe the reference is to Moses and God. None of the three of that family—Moses, Aaron, and Miriam—entered the Promised Land.

**Q:** Verse 48 says that God spoke unto Moses “that selfsame day.” This was the same day that he rehearsed the song before the people and gave them the commands of his swan song. Did Moses simply receive the instruction to climb Mount Nebo that day, or did he actually have to do the climbing as well? Since he gave blessings in the next chapter, did he climb that day or another day?

**A:** We think Moses climbed Mount Nebo and died that same day.

**Comment:** Since Moses had just given his swan song, for him to linger much longer would not have been appropriate.

**Comment:** If Moses did die that same day after all his exhausting work, the climb would have been strenuous, but it would also have been a blessing for him to be physically and mentally tired at that point and to just peacefully go to sleep instead of dying a painful death.

**Comment:** The wording of verse 49 sounds as if Moses was right at the Abarim mountain range: “Get thee up into *this* mountain Abarim, [particularly] unto mount Nebo.”

**Deut. 33:1** And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

Before his death, Moses blessed the “children” of Jacob, the 12 tribes that would be on both sides of the Jordan. Since the blessing is complicated, there are many opinions on its meaning.

**Deut. 33:2** And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

The Law started in Egypt on the night of the Passover, but it originated at Sinai as far as detail is concerned. Seir, which is associated with Edom, was situated mostly on the southwestern side of the Dead Sea. Mount Paran was in the same general area.

**Comment:** According to a Bible commentary, verse 2 is poetic language saying that Jehovah came from Sinai and dawned from Seir and shined forth from Mount Paran. It was as if God was showing the way to the Promised Land by His rising like the sun across the land.

Jehovah “came with ten thousands of saints [His angels]: [and] from his right hand went a fiery law for them.” Angels were involved in the institution, or inauguration, of the Law but not necessarily when God’s literal voice spoke from the mount to the nation of Israel. Moses told the nation in advance to sanctify and prepare themselves for that occasion (Psa. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Exod. 19:10,11,14,15). The nation saw or heard a dark cloud, lightning, thunder, an earthquake, and a voice so loud that the pitch affected the people’s eardrums (Exod. 19:16). Moses then fittingly became the mouthpiece of God, whose presence was too awesome for mortal man. However, God did speak to Moses “face to face” (Exod. 33:11). Of course God was screened, but he spoke to Moses more intimately than to any other prophet. With others, God spoke in a little different fashion and through the Logos.

During the wilderness wanderings, a lot of miraculous things happened, and in some of those miracles, either God used the direct molecular control that He has over all nature, or He used angels, spirit beings, invisible forces, unbeknownst to the Israelites. For instance, not only were quail brought in by a wind, but they were brought in at such a low level that the Israelites could bat them down with sticks. The word “angels” can also refer to human messengers or servants, such as Moses and Joshua, whom God highly honored by having them explain His purpose to Israel. Thus “angels” are either or both spirit and human depending on the circumstance. We are reminded of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, which states, “The reapers are the angels” (Matt. 13:39). There the “angels” are particularly spirit beings. However, the “angels” to the seven churches were human agents (Rev. 1:20).

The God of the universe chose Israel as His peculiar people, and they should have awakened to the fact that it was most unusual for the Creator to communicate with mortals. Now He would show His dealings with them. A lot of the succeeding information in chapter 33 was prophetic, and some was based on past events.

**Comment:** God’s providence kept the Israelites all the way in their journey from Mount Sinai, where the Law was given, up to Seir and Mount Paran. He was reminding them of His continuous special watch-care.

**Reply:** Yes, the people failed to remember all the things God had done for them, let alone the parting of the Red Sea and the ten plagues. They did not comprehend the fact that He was proving them, to see if they really loved Him. The older generation did not get the lesson, and all perished except Joshua and Caleb. Daily reminders included the pillar of the cloud, which directed them, and the cloud itself, the curtain above that provided shade by day and furnished illumination and retained the desert heat at night. When the Israelites’ journey is shown in the Kingdom Age, everyone, including those who were there, will see how dull of comprehension they were not to recognize what was happening. When something happens regularly—like the sun coming up every morning—people tend to lose sight of the miraculous nature of the event because it is so common. The Lord used miracles all the time in the wilderness, but their very frequency caused the Israelites to forget what was happening.

**Comment:** People generally like to blame Satan for everything, but the heart condition of the Israelites was the problem. They did not catch the clue that God was watching over them. Brethren think that in the future with Satan being bound, mankind will be so obedient, but people in the Kingdom will forget just as the Israelites did.

**Reply:** Yes. God said, “I alone led the Israelites. No other gods were involved in their care.”



However, that care was removed depending upon the degree of disobedience or willfulness.

From God's "right hand went [forth] a fiery law." If the Israelites disobeyed during Moses' tenure of office, when he was the mediator for natural Israel, there was an immediate punitive response or action, but as history went on, even up to and beyond the days of Malachi, the wicked were allowed to prosper. In the Kingdom Age, swift retribution will once again occur. Some action will be taken to suppress evil. During Joshua's leadership, quick retribution came for a while. The later withholding of immediate punishments was a proving method to see whether the Israelites had the faith to be faithful.

**Q:** Was the cloud that overspread the nation considered an "angel" of Jehovah?

**A:** Particularly the *pillar* of the cloud, which was at the forefront, leading the nation, had that designation. The cloud seemed to have an intelligence in it. When God spoke, the voice came from that cloud. People in the court could hear God speaking to Moses, and sometimes the priests had to go into the Tabernacle to be secretly informed. Some of the Psalms mention that God was shrouded in the dark cloud by day and in the fiery cloud by night.

Here the account states that a "fiery law" went forth from God's right hand; that is, quick judgment was forthcoming for disobedience. When the people disobeyed, they died depending on the seriousness of the deflection.

Verse 2, which tells about Sinai, Seir, and Mount Paran, is based on God's natural leadings of His people on specific occasions when the leadings were dramatized and the mountain was involved in connection with the revelations. In the spiritual application, God will come in the future with His saints. God's coming at Mount Sinai with the Israelites pictures the coming of the New (Law) Covenant. Before that covenant is inaugurated, a very visible manifestation will occur that will be different from what happened in the past, when God Himself spoke through a dark cloud.

Also, dramatic things will happen in regard to Jacob's Trouble. God will wait until the situation and providences for Israel look like a total failure. The enemy will be victorious and gloating for a while. Jerusalem will be taken, and women will be raped, leaving only a small remnant. Then God will act and do things that He did in ancient times. His tremendous judgments and the deliverance of the Holy Remnant will be the most visual scene we could imagine. The Mount of Olives will split in twain, and the Scriptures even give the measurements of the valley that will open up, providing a way of escape through which the Holy Remnant will flee for safety. The corpses will be so great in number that seven months will be required to bury them. The events will be just as dramatic as the crossing of the Red Sea in Moses' day.

**Q:** Is there a connection between verse 2 and Jude 14,15? "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all."

**A:** Yes, we are coming to that point.

**Deut. 33:3** Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

Normally we apply the word "saints" to the Gospel Age. That is true, but there were also saints in Old Testament times. The only difference is the level of the highness of the calling in the Gospel Age. Aaron was called the "saint" of God, and as we read in Deuteronomy, we find that some of the individuals back there were considered "saints" on a servant level (Psa. 106:16).

The house of servants of the Old Testament is contrasted with the house of sons of the New Testament (Heb. 3:5,6). An additional thought inherent in the usage of the word “saint” in the Old Testament is that Moses, Aaron, and the other Ancient Worthies will get a spirit resurrection subsequently. Their spirit change will come at the end of the Kingdom Age, after the Millennium. There are at least eight scriptural reasons for this conclusion.

“Yea, he [God] loved the people.” A number of Scriptures or illustrations show God’s tenderness in calling His people out of Egypt. God heard their cries when they were unjustly oppressed under taskmasters. He bore the nation on the wings of an eagle. He found the Israelites as an infant in the wilderness condition in Egypt, the “furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:10). God called them out of Egypt and dealt with them in the Wilderness of Sinai. But the younger generation (under age 20) were the most pleasing, for they entered the Promised Land.

“All his saints are in thy hand.” The wording reminds us of the Book of Revelation. In some places, the Apostle John interjected his own enthusiasm, such as “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” or “Amen” (Rev. 1:6; 22:20). Here Moses was talking as with a “thus saith the LORD,” yet he was speaking from his own heart. The Holy Spirit allowed him to enter personally into the writing, as though he were doing the blessing. Moses was so much in empathy with God’s dealings with Israel—he was so overwhelmed with God’s kindness, love, and providence—that he spoke as though the thoughts were coming from him. Then all of a sudden he said, “The saints are all in thy hand [O God].” It was as though Moses became conscious of the fact and did not want to overstep his bounds.

“Yea, he [God] loved the people.” In verse 3, Moses repeatedly used singular pronouns to refer to God: “All *his* [God’s] saints are in *thy* hand: and they sat down at *thy* feet; every one shall receive of *thy* words.” The ensuing blessing of the tribes was *God’s blessing through Moses*, but the phrasing sounds like Moses’ personal blessing.

“They sat down at thy feet.” When Moses spoke to or judged the 2 million Israelites at Mount Sinai, he stood on the top of a rock, for in order to be heard, he had to be elevated. The people sat at Moses’ feet, but *God* was speaking *through Moses*, giving wisdom to render proper judgment for the many problems that came before him. Moses had the liberty to go into the Tabernacle at all times.

**Q:** What is the difference between Sinai and Horeb?

**A:** Horeb is the mountain range, which has three different peaks.

**Q:** The people sat down [*past tense*] at Moses’ feet, but “every one shall receive [*future tense*] of thy [God’s] words.” Is the latter thought prophetic?

**A:** Yes, but the more we understand the type, the better we will understand the antitype. The old Law Covenant with Moses as the mediator is a picture of the New (Law) Covenant with Jesus as the Mediator in the Kingdom. The New Covenant will be very similar to the old Law Covenant.

**Deut. 33:4** Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.

Ezra added this statement many years after Moses’ death. Moses “commanded ... the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.”

**Comment:** The Israelites regarded the Law as a burden, so the word “inheritance” is interesting. They suffered under the Law because of disobedience, but here is a whole new light on the

Law. An inheritance is a blessing.

**Reply:** Those who tried to keep the Law could see that it was perfect. Their very desire and hunger to do God's will and their remorse for any disobedience were much like the efforts of the Christian in the Gospel Age and of mankind in the Kingdom Age. The saints in prior ages were of the house of servants. Servants of the higher rank (such as Moses, Daniel, and Job) will be "princes in all the earth" in the next age (Psa. 45:16). They will rank higher than the Great Company, who will serve as messengers and have no executive authority. Thus those of the Jewish Age who diligently served God by faith will get an inheritance in the Kingdom Age as a reward and an even higher reward afterwards.

**Deut. 33:5** And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

The heads of the 12 tribes, as well as the people, sat at Moses' feet, all being very attentive as they were gathered together. Moses was like a "king in Jeshurun [Israel]" because he was treated with such respect. In antitype, Jesus will be King (and Priest) after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1). Both aspects—the sacerdotal and the civil—will be inherent in the leadership under Christ in the Kingdom Age.

In spite of the respect many Israelites had for Moses, a large number were disobedient. The same will be true in the Kingdom Age under Jesus. In fact, there are indications that perhaps half of the people will perish at that time because of not being fit to live everlastingly under God's law of true love. People must be educated to know what love is. It is a feeling, yes, but that feeling of love must be educated, disciplined, and informed and not be an emotion of one's own imagination.

Verses 1-5 are introductory. Subsequent verses go into deeper understanding. As an illustration, when we enter a forest, the first thing to do is to back off and look to see if there are any mountains or distinctions in the landscape to give us a form of orientation against a direction of the compass. Without at least one reference point, we could get really lost. Two reference points are better, and three or more make traveling through the forest easy.

**Deut. 33:6** Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.

Verse 6 begins the blessing of Moses on the nation just prior to his decease—something like that of Jacob in Genesis 49 shortly before he died. The time interval between Jacob's blessing and this one of Moses was roughly 230 years. We will examine the somewhat astonishing details of Moses' blessing for each of the tribes.

"Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few." What happened to cause that type of salutation to Reuben? We notice right away that the end product is beneficial; that is, not only would his life be preserved, but those of his tribe would multiply.

"Let Reuben live" implies he did something not too favorable. We know that Reuben lost the birthright, yet in this blessing, his name was mentioned first, ahead of the one or ones who would inherit the blessing of the firstborn in his stead. It is important to realize that Moses' blessing was *God's thinking at that time*, not at the time of Jacob and not necessarily at a later time.

What did Reuben do that was unfavorable? He committed the disgraceful act of going in and lying with Bilhah, one of the concubines associated with Rachel (Gen. 35:22). However, his subsequent intervention on behalf of Joseph offset this act. As the other brothers saw Joseph

approaching from a distance and were conspiring to kill him, Reuben put brakes on the assassination plot by saying, “Let us not kill Joseph and incur the guilt, for then his blood would be upon us, and our father Jacob would miss him” (Gen. 37:18-32 paraphrase). Reuben wanted to delay the action by putting Joseph in a pit so that he could return later and rescue him. Thus Reuben was concerned and was not part of the conspiracy to kill Joseph.

Later when the brothers went to Egypt in time of famine and were in front of Joseph, whom they did not recognize, Reuben reminded them of things they had done to Joseph in the past. With their consciences beginning to be pricked, the brothers felt that maybe their current experiences were retribution for what they had done to Joseph, whom they presumed was either dead or lost and forgotten. Reuben said in the Hebrew language to his brothers, “Didn’t I tell you that we should not have done those things to Joseph? God is now punishing us and giving us all these problems because of what we did” (Gen. 42:21,22 paraphrase). Thus Reuben offset his former vile deed by the good he did for Joseph, and this offset gives us an insight into the Heavenly Father’s character.

For all of God’s people, the consecrated—whether in the Jewish Age or in the Gospel Age—if one who has committed willful sin is to be recovered, the penalty for the willful sin is expiation in some fashion in the present life. If the person follows up with a sincere desire for repentance and forgiveness, there is a hope of recovery. Thus there is a balancing. As Christians, we are being judged for the things we have done willfully, particularly after consecration. Many sins, such as a nasty remark, contain a measure of willfulness, but God judges as to the degree of willfulness that makes one responsible to the extent of Second Death. God has a scale of judgment, whereas we do not know where to draw the definitive line. Only when we finish our course will we know where we stand, but we are being judged according to God’s scale. Of course those in the Jewish Age cannot go into Second Death, for they have not heard of Christ. In other words, no one could reap a destiny of Second Death prior to Jesus’ First Advent, for all are guaranteed to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). This truth is a rather simple knowledge but with accurate facts.

The birthright Reuben lost went to Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Therefore, Joseph’s name is mentioned in Moses’ blessing (Deut. 33:13). In fact, Joseph got one of Moses’ most grandiose promises as to what will happen to his lineage.

In the final analysis, in the far distant future, Reuben will end up second in the blessing. Judah excelled eventually, for out of Judah came the Messiah, and Reuben was second. That same sequence is followed in the high priest’s breastplate, as well as in several other places. In the breastplate, Reuben is likened to the Apostle Peter. The first four apostles—Paul, Peter, John, and James—can be identified because the Scriptures are so replete with information about them. The top two apostles seem to be Paul and Peter, and Peter recognized that Paul was his superior (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

**Comment:** Recognizing the balance between Reuben’s willful sin and his subsequent good deeds is helpful for us as Christians.

**Reply:** Paul said, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, [so] that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom. 6:1,2). Shall we presume on our merciful God, thinking we can commit willful sin, and then repent and be forgiven? No! We cannot sin as *foresight*, thinking we will be forgiven by taking the proper steps. That would be presuming upon God’s mercy.

**Deut. 33:7** And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

Moses' blessing of Judah was favorable. We do not see the same degree of reserve that was in Reuben's blessing, for there is only a very slight twinge of reserve; namely, "let his hands be *sufficient* for him." On the favorable side, Judah offered to be surety for the safe return of Benjamin to Jacob (Gen. 43:8,9). Judah reasoned that if Jacob did not allow Benjamin to go to Egypt to buy food, they would all perish in the famine. Thus we can see that there was a good streak in Judah.

Judah suggested a compromise in regard to Joseph. Instead of killing him, Judah said they should "sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh" (Gen. 37:27). This suggestion was a compromise, whereas Reuben wanted to release Joseph somehow and bring him back to Jacob. Judah said in effect, "If we sell Joseph as a slave to the Ishmaelites, he will be off our hands in Egypt, and he will not be able to trouble us in the family arrangement."

**Comment:** Later Judah's conscience bothered him, so he offered to be surety for Benjamin.

On the negative side, Judah defaulted on giving another son to Tamar as a husband after Er and Onan, her first and second husbands, died (Gen. 38:6-26).

"Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah" suggests that God could have been less merciful by not granting Judah any cognition. Moses was saying, "LORD, answer the prayer of Judah. Be kind to him." Of the two brothers, Reuben committed a far worse deed in defiling his father's couch.

**Comment:** Reuben knew what he was doing, whereas Judah did not know that the harlot was Tamar, his daughter-in-law.

**Reply:** Yes, and the suggestion about the Ishmaelites was not premeditated.

"Be thou an help to him [Judah] from his enemies." Again the nature of that request indicates a slight reserve but an overall blessing. The blessing to each tribe was judgmental, for God was pronouncing through Moses His thinking at that time based upon relatively current actions and deeds.

Judah represented the Apostle Paul, the first position on the breastplate. Paul said, "I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," and he enumerated his sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11:5,23-27). Despite his sufferings and persecutions, he overcame and kept his zeal for the Lord unto death.

**Deut. 33:8** And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

In the blessing of Levi, Moses said, "Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with thy holy one," i.e., with Aaron, "the saint of the LORD" (Psa. 106:16). Following the incident with the golden calf, Moses said, "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me." All the sons of Levi then gathered themselves together unto Moses and followed the instruction to "put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." The Levites obeyed, "and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exod. 32:26-28). This obedience offset the negative experience where Moses said, "Must we [meaning himself and either God or possibly Aaron] fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10).

The blessings and curses were current, pertaining to something relatively recent in the history

of the tribes back there. The earlier blessings pronounced by Jacob on his children pertained to what they had done or not done in his day. That judgment could change depending on other conditions in the lineage as time went on. Of course Aaron's posterity had only to do with the high priest, for to be of the priesthood, one had to be not only a Levite but also a son of Aaron. Thus there was a distinction between the priesthood and the Levites.

Levi was tested, or proved, at Massah, or Meribah, where God told Moses to smite the rock to bring forth water for the murmuring Israelites (Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13). "Thummim" and "Urim" refer to the reflection of the jewels on the high priest's breastplate. For example, a dimming, or dulling, of a stone indicated that a party was guilty, and a shining of a stone above the normal brilliance was an indication of favor to that particular tribe. If all of the stones shone above their normal luster, a favorable deed or action was taken in regard to the entire nation. The high priest addressed the questions to God.

**Deut. 33:9** Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

What is the thought of "I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children"? The same thought was expressed three times. The point is that when the Levites slew all who were guilty of worshipping the golden calf, they did not allow any relationship—father, brother, son, etc.—to interfere with the judgment or to alter their decision to slaughter those who were worthy of death.

In Genesis 49:5, part of Jacob's deathbed blessing, we can see Levi's characteristic of righteous indignation: "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." Because of anger at Shechem for violating their sister Dinah, Levi and Simeon wrongly killed the Shechemites through deception, waiting until they were weak and sore from circumcision (Genesis 34). Somewhat similarly, Paul thought he was doing God's will when he killed Christians prior to his conversion. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees in doing what he thought was right, but his righteous indignation went in the wrong direction.

*In Jacob's day*, both Levi and Simeon were given a negative vote with no favor at all (Gen. 49:5,6). Thus Jacob replaced them with Joseph's children, Ephraim and Manasseh, leaving 12 names for the tribes. Ephraim, the second-born, was blessed above Manasseh, the firstborn. *In Moses' day*, the blessing for Levi was much more favorable. In studying the changes, we get an idea of how the Heavenly Father proves His people to see whether they love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength. The principle is always applicable, but the standard was a little different in Old Testament times. For instance, multiple wives were allowed then but not in the Gospel Age. We are only responsible for what we know at the time we are living. The first sons born to Jacob were of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Judah did not get the firstborn privilege, but he got the royal lineage. The firstborn rite went to Joseph's children.

"For they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." At the time of Moses, the Levites were a later generation. Hence a son can be higher in God's sight than his father, or vice versa. An exception would be in considering the "father" as the Jewish Age, for God's people in the Gospel Age are on a higher level and are being tried for a higher reward.

**Deut. 33:10** They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.

**Deut. 33:11** Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

“That they rise not again.” Moses pronounced a blessing on that current generation to the effect that they would be faithful unto death. Those who afflicted the faithful would get their just reward, for their character was fixed.

Verse 11 is a blessing we wish on those who consecrate and try to walk the narrow way. We like to wish them Godspeed in our heart, although we should have a little reserve because we do not know everything about them. Our knowledge is limited.

**Comment:** The listings in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 seem to be different for the following reason. In Genesis 49, Levi got a negative report, but by Deuteronomy 33, the tribe had proved itself by doing something commendatory in slaying the Israelites who were guilty of worshipping the golden calf. Phinehas, also a Levite, stood up and acted on righteous indignation. Therefore, the Levites redeemed themselves. However, Simeon did not receive a blessing in Deuteronomy 33, apparently because he did not offset the earlier wrong conduct.

**Reply:** Yes, Simeon is omitted in the Deuteronomy listing because up to that time, the report was still unfavorable. However, what happened subsequently could again change the listing for each tribe. Thus what a son and his great great grandfather do with their characters can be entirely different. Also, a person can have four children, and those children can be as different as night and day in temperament, behavior, appearance, etc. God judges a person according to what he is, not what his parent were. The exception would be where all may have died because of the type, but their lineage is another matter. All who have ever lived have to come to a knowledge of the truth that Jesus is the Savior—whether an infant of days or an old man who has supposedly filled his years. Psalm 109 tells that not only Judas but also others who were associated with him will go into Second Death. No mercy will be extended to them because they were in on the guilt with Judas.

Before proceeding, we will have a little review. Originally, the 12 tribes were in sequential order according to birth, and their names reflected the experience the mother had at the time of their birth. In this sequence, the representation of the families was disproportionate because Leah’s offspring through both herself and her handmaiden were a ratio of 8 to 4 when compared with those of Rachel and her handmaiden; that is, Leah had eight representations, and Rachel had only four. Later on, before his death, Jacob wanted to straighten out the matter. Therefore, he pronounced a blessing on Joseph’s two children, Ephraim and Manasseh. Subsequently, he also blessed the tribes, but of the original 12, Levi and Simeon were given curses. By so doing, Jacob, who loved Rachel more than Leah, brought the proportion down and evened it out. Ephraim and Manasseh, Rachel’s grandsons, were the replacements for Levi and Simeon on Leah’s side. As a result, each mother had a representation of six offspring by counting the two children who were born through the respective concubines.

But now we are studying the time of Moses, so the listing here in Deuteronomy is different. Levi had been restored by this time, and Simeon would be restored soon in another circumstance. Then the equation would be more or less the same, relatively speaking, with some minor changes that are major in significance, symbolically speaking.

“They [the Levites] shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law.” “Jacob” and “Israel” are synonyms here.

“They [the Levites] shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.” Incense was offered by the priest in the Holy. A “whole burnt sacrifice” was burnt in entirety with the exclusion of the skin and the entrails, as was taught much earlier. Thus the animal had a sweet odor like cooking meat, whereas the inclusion of the skin and the hair would have

caused a stench. The hide was always burnt without the camp, unless, depending on the circumstance, the priest took it as a possession. Symbolically, a burnt offering indicated something that was offered to make the subsequent sacrifices acceptable, or if a burnt offering was offered later, it meant that the preceding offerings were accepted. In other words, sometimes the burnt offering preceded the sin offering, and at other times, the sin offering preceded the burnt offering.

Originally, for thousands of years that extended from before the Deluge up until the time of Moses, offerings were mostly just burnt offerings, but the burnt offering could be a thank offering, sin offering, vow offering, etc., and even a peace offering later on. However, under Moses, all kinds of *separate* offerings were added such as heave offerings, freewill offerings, and sin offerings. The offerings became more and more complicated, but studying Scripture in the sequence in which it was written helps us to remember the details. The Scriptures then become like building blocks, starting with kindergarten, next first grade, second grade, etc. We need a skeletal framework on which to build or subtract as God gives further instructions.

**Comment:** A whole burnt offering would be a complete, fully consumed offering.

**Reply:** Yes, but it was burnt without dung, entrails, and the hide, as we learned earlier in the Bible. When the hide and the dung were burnt outside the camp, they had a bad odor. Both physically and spiritually speaking, the offering was not attractive in the eyes of the public.

The incense that was offered in the Holy was a representation of what was burnt of the animal in the Court. Symbolically speaking, the perfection of the animal, which was offered on the Brazen Altar in the Court, became incense that was offered in the Holy. Thus, when an animal was offered, there were three different types of odor: (1) sweet incense in the Holy, (2) a pleasant cooking odor in the Court, and (3) a stench outside the camp.

Very little of the animal was actually put on the altar in the other offerings. For example, in a sin offering, 75 or 80 percent of the animal was burnt without the camp. All that was burnt on the altar was the caul above the liver, the kidneys, and the fat. Sometimes much of the animal was given to the priest, or the people making the offering could keep a portion for themselves to eat while they were present at the feast.

Understanding these details becomes more and more important as we get nearer to the end of the age. We make this statement because an understanding of the Tabernacle usually alerts us when someone is going out of the truth. Right away we know if a teaching is a violation of Scripture. The Tabernacle is specific, whereas the subject of love, for instance, is nebulous.

“Bless, LORD, his [the Levite’s] substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him.” This verse is interesting in view of what has happened in Israel’s history. The Levitical offerings of Israel, not the Muslims’ offerings, were acceptable to Jehovah. It is like the principle that no one can be saved except through Christ. Jesus, a Jew, said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The application is narrow, but it is the truth. Jesus is the only way. He said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). That statement is both inclusive and exclusive.

“Smite through the loins ... of them that hate him, that they rise not again” if they persist in hatred against the Jew or against the salvation that comes in the restitution period, when all must bow the knee to Christ. A curse will remain on such individuals if they do not get out of that mode and repent.

**Q:** Was this warning about the consequences of hating the Levites directed against the other



tribes of Israel as well?

**A:** In principle, that would be true, but we think this verse has a broader application.

**Deut. 33:12** And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

When Reuben, Simeon, and Levi forfeited the role of firstborn because of disobedience, Judah got the role of kingship, and Joseph got the right of firstborn, a double representation in the tribes, through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Benjamin was called “The beloved of the LORD.” Dwelling “between his shoulders” refers to the geographical location of the tribe. For example, most of Jerusalem, the capital, was in the territory of Benjamin. The point was that Benjamin would be favored with a blessing because of its close association with Judah both geographically and sympathetically. The two-tribe kingdom consisted of Judah and Benjamin. While Simeon was in the territory of Judah, that tribe comprised little enclaves. Saul spoke of Benjamin as being the least of all the tribes, and Benjamin was almost wiped out on one occasion, yet favor was shown here (1 Sam. 9:21).

Jerusalem is situated at a higher elevation, about 1,000 feet above sea level, and so is Benjamin. Both are on a ridge, and that ridge is like two shoulders, with a right shoulder and a left shoulder. Of the two shoulders, Benjamin had the bigger portion. In the Book of Joshua, the territories of each tribe are described as allocated at that time. The boundaries are given with landmarks such as valleys, hills, rivers, and mountains. In the Kingdom, the territories of the tribes will be parallel strips, as opposed to the irregular boundaries in Joshua’s day.

**Deut. 33:13** And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

Verse 4 speaks about the “inheritance ... of Jacob,” and verse 13 adds the phrase “and of Joseph,” yet neither Joseph nor Jacob was one of the 12 tribes. Before Moses’ demise, he offered two blessings, one of Jacob to the 12 tribes and one of Joseph to two tribes. However, two of the 12 tribes of Jacob—Levi and Simeon—were more or less curses. For that reason, Moses went to the other blessings that Jacob had pronounced upon Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, for they would replace the omission of Levi and Simeon from the original blessings. When two tribes were subtracted from the 12, that left ten tribes, to which Ephraim and Manasseh were added for a total of 12. In other words, two blessings went to Joseph through each of his two sons.

Joseph’s blessing, which is the blessing of the firstborn, covers verses 13-17. Notice that the connecting words “and for” are used for verses 14-16. The length of the blessing is like a cup that overflows.

“Blessed of the LORD be his [Joseph’s] land,” that is, the land of Israel from the physical standpoint. Joseph’s land was blessed “for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath.” The latter phrase “for the deep that coucheth beneath” refers to riches under the ground that are not spelled out here. Examples of such riches are oil, minerals, and water. Subsequent verses explain the three categories listed in verse 13: (1) “the precious things of heaven,” (2) “the dew,” and (3) “the deep that coucheth beneath.” Dew is also one of the “precious things of heaven.” Although dew comes up from the ground, it is indirectly a product of the heavens above.

**Deut. 33:14** And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things

**put forth by the moon,**

Joseph's land was blessed "for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon." In other words, the land would produce rich crops. The details, the specifics, are given in the Book of Joshua.

**Q:** The King James margin has "moons" (plural). Do the "moons" refer to the lunar cycle each month? Is the blessing being stated from an agricultural point of view?

**A:** The answer is yes to both questions. The moon—that is, the monthly lunar cycle—has a peculiar influence on crops. The lunar-year reckoning was 12 months of 30 days each, for a total of 360 days. Since the solar year is 365 1/4 days, there is a five-day difference in the two calendars. The moon is important in determining the time of sowing, whereas the sun takes over in the growing and the reaping process.

**Comment:** For the end of verse 14, Rotherham has, "And with the precious yield of the moon." That rendering ties in the moon cycles with the harvest. The Revised Standard has "the rich yield of the months."

**Deut. 33:15 And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,**

Joseph's land was blessed "for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills." The "ancient mountains," a deeper penetration of the earth, refer to diamonds. Some of the precious jewels come from a much deeper layer of the earth. For instance, diamonds come from volcanic chimneys, or pipes, that reach down very, very deep into the earth. In that blue soil, man can find diamonds. Precious stones are usually more subterranean than the semiprecious stones. Diamonds and precious stones can be considered "produce" that is harvested from the earth.

The age-lasting hills are more recent. Sometimes they are the by-product of ancient mountains, which are more the subterranean earth that rose up through the water, as indicated in Genesis.

**Comment:** In olden times, vineyards were on the hills in Israel.

**Reply:** Yes, olive trees were grown in terraces on the hills.

**Comment:** As part of Joseph's blessing, Jacob said, "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren" (Gen. 49:26).

**Reply:** Yes, that cross-reference is related to the setting here in Deuteronomy.

**Comment:** The Revised Standard states that Joseph's land was blessed with "the finest produce of the ancient mountains, and abundance of the everlasting hills."

**Deut. 33:16 And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.**

Finally, Joseph's land was blessed "for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." The "bush" is a reference to the burning bush

(Exod. 3:2). The goodwill of God came on Joseph when he was separated from his brethren. God overruled so that he became the prime minister of Egypt. Thus he was a great personage in the then known civilized world. It was designed that Joseph would be a representation of Jesus, for when Jesus came at his First Advent, his brethren (the nation of Israel) rejected him as the Messiah except for a relative handful of individuals.

“Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him [Joseph again] that was separated from his brethren.” The Holy Spirit emanated from God through Moses, calling to memory what was needful to heal the wound. God’s mercy and methodology operated according to the exigencies or circumstances that existed at the time these different pronouncements were made. Covering various time periods, the pronouncements were to be considered in a slightly different light with a new environment in each case.

**Deut. 33:17 His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.**

“Wild oxen” is the thought rather than “unicorns.” Wild oxen were specially chosen for plowing because of their unusual strength. Joseph’s two “horns” were Ephraim and Manasseh, who played a very prominent role in warfare. Numerically speaking, they were above average among the tribes. This prophecy seems contradictory in the earlier stages, but as the history of Israel developed, Ephraim became so numerous that the ten tribes were called by that name.

Manasseh, the firstborn, was outnumbered by Ephraim. Moses spoke of the “ten thousands of Ephraim” and the “thousands of Manasseh.” It is interesting that the Heavenly Father considered all of the actions under certain circumstances and then changed His methodology to bring them back into the overall harmony of His Word. Even though Manasseh was the firstborn, Ephraim got the blessing first. However, Manasseh caught up by having something Ephraim never had; namely, the half tribe of Manasseh on the far side of the Jordan River represents the spiritual inheritance of the Ancient Worthies. In one picture, Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh east of the Jordan all represent spiritual inheritances. The 9 1/2 tribes west of Jordan get the temporal or earthly inheritance. Therefore, the real blessing that Manasseh lost, he got back under Joshua.

First, it is important to understand the blessings on the tribes. Then later it can be seen that each of the tribes had an outstanding weakness. Only Levi’s and Simeon’s weaknesses are called to mind here, but the other tribes also had to overcome a particular problem. For instance, Ephraim was called “a cake not turned,” that is, a half-baked cake, a cake cooked on only one side (Hos. 7:8). Ephraim’s problem of not being fully developed is a picture of the Great Company class. If persisted in, that weakness leads to Second Death. The same principle applies to each of the 12 tribes, for they all came from Adam. The good points of the tribes are primarily brought out in the history of Israel. Where fault was found with a tribe, the bad habit was healed, so that, generally speaking, the tribes were reinstated. The tribe of Dan pictures a Second Death class: “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward” (Gen. 49:17).

**Deut. 33:18 And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.**

**Deut. 33:19 They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.**

Zebulun's "going out" pertains to the sea, and Issachar was associated with tents. Zebulun will "suck of the abundance of the seas," and Issachar will "suck ... of treasures hid in the sand." Oil has been found off the coast of Gaza, where there is relatively easy access. This area belongs to the Arabs, whereas the Israelis claim the sea a little to the north as their inheritance. However, warfare between the Palestinians and the Israelis inhibits the development. Incidentally, an abundance of oil at the bottom of the Dead Sea has not been exploited yet. In addition, large reservoirs of oil and water are located underneath the desert in the Sinai Peninsula.

**Comment:** Asher was given the promise that he shall "dip his foot in oil" (Deut. 33:24). A recent article said the world is currently outconsuming the amount of oil that is economically available to produce. Basically, only one barrel of new oil reserves is being found for every two barrels that are being consumed. The suggestion is that within 20 years, the picture will change dramatically, especially because of China's rising oil consumption. The inability to extract oil can lead to devastating economic situations. For example, there are tremendous oil reserves in sand, but the ability to extract the oil is economically prohibitive. The fulfillment of the Asher prophecy will be phenomenal because right now only four of the 55 oil-producing countries are in a position to increase production. All of the other countries are continually decreasing production because their reserves are not adequate.

**Q:** Since we expect new and cleaner alternative sources of energy in the Kingdom, why was a prophecy of oil given to three tribes—Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar? When will these prominent prophecies of oil have their fulfillment? Perhaps the production of oil following the fulfillment of Psalm 83 will make Israel an even more attractive spoil for Gog at the time of Jacob's Trouble. In the Kingdom, we do not expect oil to be the major source of energy.

**A:** Not much information is given along that line. Good-quality gasoline can be made from olive leaves, for example. Solar power is another possibility, and there may be an unlimited supply of energy in ice crystals.

**Comment:** The verses for Zebulun and Issachar are blessings. If the statement "they shall call the people unto the mountain" refers to the Temple Mount, then this blessing would have an implication in the Kingdom as well as in the past.

**Reply:** Yes, that is correct. The statement "they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness" refers particularly to the Kingdom Age, when the prophesied productivity will be fulfilled. The people will then offer "sacrifices of righteousness" in the Third Temple.

**Deut. 33:20** And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.

**Deut. 33:21** And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Gad "dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head." The name Gad means "troops," and more specifically, "five troops." When the Israelites left Rameses in the Exodus from Egypt, they departed in groups of five families abreast, followed by a space, then another five families abreast and a space, etc. This method allowed for hasty progress. Moreover, the Israelites could easily go through a ravine or a narrow, constricted part of the journey without delay, for then the five families would just go one after the other instead of abreast. When the families marched abreast, we estimate there was about a two-mile width, and when they crossed the Red Sea, they covered an area about two miles wide. Years ago we studied the floor of the Gulf of Suez and the different depths. On one tour, we saw the

peninsula from which the Israelites entered the Red Sea. The extrusion goes out perhaps three miles, and we believe that is the exact spot where they crossed the sea. The Exodus route was Rameses, Succoth, Etham, and Pi-hahiroth.

**Comment:** When verses 20 and 21 are combined, the blessing is favorable, yet verse 20 by itself seems warlike. However, that warlike quality was apparently good because verse 21 states that Gad “executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.” The Gadites seemed to have a strong sense of righteous indignation.

**Reply:** The Apostle Paul is an example. As a Pharisee, he was very fiery, wanting to exterminate the Christian religion, but when harnessed and disciplined, that type of character can be helpful. All of the semiprecious jewels are from silicon, so they are like sandpaper. In other words, we all have rough edges, and during our Christian walk, we become educated to do less faultfinding unless the situation is of a serious doctrinal or moral nature.

**Comment:** 1 Chronicles 12:8 states, “And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.”

**Reply:** Yes, those were Gad characteristics particularly at the time the Israelites entered the land. All of the tribes had good and bad points.

**Deut. 33:22** And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

Although not much information is given, verse 22 has a favorable connotation, for “he shall leap from Bashan” sounds like a pretty good leap.

**Q:** Does Bashan represent the nominal system?

**A:** In the literal historical account, Bashan is more or less associated with the worship of the ten tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom. From that standpoint, the Bashan religion was a substitute religion introduced by Jeroboam. Therefore, the spiritual application, or antitype, would be the false nominal Church.

**Q:** What is the significance of “a lion’s whelp”?

**A:** The reference is to a young lion rather than to a more mature lion. A young lion waits in the den, depending on an older lion to bring back food. As the whelp waits, it voices discontent for its hunger by crying, just as baby birds continually cry in the nest to have provender brought to them. A young lion’s appetite is insatiable, exhausting the parents.

We cannot go into a deep explanation of verse 22 because of the brevity of the statement. Certainly, however, it was significant to Israel back there in Moses’ day. From other Scriptures, we know Dan was a very skillful warlike tribe that was helpful in fighting Israel’s battles. Shortly after Israel entered the land, Dan became the northernmost tribe. The saying “from Dan to Beer-sheba” meant from the extreme north to the extreme south of the land of Israel.

**Deut. 33:23** And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

Naphtali’s blessing was favorable at this particular time when Moses’ demise and replacement by Joshua were imminent. Not only would Naphtali have an inheritance in the land, but the

land would be on the west coast and to the south. At this time, to our understanding, Naphtali was not situated in the southern part of Israel with Judah and Beer-sheba. Therefore, the reference was to the southern region of the land allotment to the ten tribes. In other words, Naphtali would have land in the southern region, as well as the western region, of the northern sector of Israel—a double appendage representation, as it were. More information was given with regard to the division of the land when Joshua interpreted the exact allotments according to God's instruction. Rivers, mountains, and other details were provided.

Isaiah prophesied that when the Savior came, a great light would be in the land of Naphtali. Since Jesus' ministry was up in the northern part of the Galilee region, the southward part of Naphtali was in that vicinity. Any further information awaits a study of the Book of Joshua.

**Comment:** Naphtali's area is very fruitful.

**Reply:** Yes, and it is 800 feet below sea level, even though quite far north in Israel. The winters are not severe there, and even palm trees grow. The verdure is sufficient for animals to graze.

**Deut. 33:24** **And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.**

Asher's territory varies on Bible maps depending on the time period. The location of this tribe has changed somewhat over a process of time. The suggestion here is that oil will be found, and one of the two places is nearer to the Mediterranean coast than to the Sea of Galilee. In addition, Asher will be blessed with children in the future.

**Deut. 33:25** **Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.**

Asher's "shoes shall be iron and brass." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" is a Scripture that is frequently used on greeting cards to brethren.

**Comment:** Rotherham calls the shoes "sandals." A Bible commentary says that Asher had 53,400 men of war, and the shoes sound like a reference to foot soldiers (Num. 26:47).

**Reply:** The reference could also be to the land under the shoes, indicating that iron and brass will be two by-products beneath the feet of those in Asher.

**Comment:** Deuteronomy 8:9 speaks of Israel: "A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a *land whose stones are iron*, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

**Reply:** Yes, the iron is a by-product.

**Deut. 33:26** **There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.**

In regard to the expression "the God of Jeshurun," Moses was called the "king in Jeshurun" in verse 5 of this same chapter. Apparently, "Jeshurun," a term of endearment, was well-known back there. God's providences were active on behalf of Jacob's children, the northern tribes, who prospered materially. In fact, their temporal prosperity led to their straying from God.

Near the capital of Samaria, and not far from the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, is a place in northern Israel with ancient ruins of beautiful and unusual castles that were tremendous in size. It is puzzling that there is no history of these buildings, which are much like those in Egypt.

The God of Jeshurun rides in the heaven, travels with the wind, and is seated on clouds as chariots. The account suggests an overruling providence of blessing on behalf of the children of Israel, to whom God was married. God was married to the *nation*, not to individuals, whereas Jesus will be married to a Bride class of *individuals*. Normally, we would rather be associated with Almighty God Himself but not in this relationship. He cared for the existence of the nation and was determined that nothing would deter His plans for the future. God was a “husband” to the nation of Israel, then He divorced them, and He will remarry the nation in the future. We understand “Jeshurun” to apply more particularly to the name Israel and the God of Jacob. This same thirty-third chapter shows a contrast between Jacob and Joseph.

**Deut. 33:27** The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

“Underneath [God] are the everlasting arms.” The cloud started to follow the Israelites on the second day after they left Egypt. They departed from Rameses and then went to a place called Succoth. From that location, still on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, the cloud was formed over the nation. The cloud, which stayed with them from that time until they entered the Promised Land, represents God’s providences. When built, the Tabernacle structure was also underneath the cloud. Boards ran lengthwise around the Tabernacle like a pair of arms. One bar went through a hole in the middle of the boards as they stood upright, acting like a backbone to bind many of the boards together. Then two pairs of bars, or arms, were on the outside of the boards. Thus the bars acted like a bundling, or a holding together, of this structure of a sacred religious nature. The cloud in the heavens above suggested temporal security and guardianship from evil and disasters, whereas the arms below and the Tabernacle structure pictured the Israelites’ trust in God for moral and spiritual nourishment. Now, instead of the literal cloud and the literal Tabernacle in their traveling mode, verse 27 refers to inward and outward providences on the Israelites’ behalf.

**Deut. 33:28** Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

Corn (grain), wine, and dew were the more outward, material, substantive blessings that were seen. Earlier in this chapter, we had mentioned that there would be a reservoir of not only oil under the land of Israel but also water—a superabundance of water, particularly in the Negev. Down below the desert, there is an illimitable supply of water. Of course corn (grain) needs water for growth.

Jacob is likened to a “fountain,” and it is significant that he had great interest in the birthright. As far as coming out of the womb, he was second-born, but like the Lord’s people in the Gospel Age, he had an intense longing for the blessing that was so ephemeral. For a future hope, Christians commit themselves to a whole life of self-denial of the pleasures of this world, prosperity, and leadership. From a personal standpoint, Jacob is a wonderful picture of the consecrated of this age. Rebekah was quite brilliant in what she planned, and “like mother, like son.” It is important to *act* upon our faith.

**Deut. 33:29** Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

**Q:** Does verse 29 refer to the deliverance of the Holy Remnant?

**A:** From the standpoint of principle, that is true. God, who has many plans for Israel, has

determined that Israel will be a blessing nation. Satan usually tries to undermine God's plans, and the worship of other gods took place on Israel's "high places." Satan tried to slow down and negate God's promises with these groves, which appealed to the baser instincts of man. We have always been amazed by the consistent obstinacy of Satan. How did he ever think he could get away with his plans? When originally created, he was like a god, endowed with all kinds of capabilities, but they certainly went to his head. We have reasoned the only way Satan could persist in his opposition to God is that he concluded spirit beings can never be destroyed. Supposed justification for this thinking on his part is that up to the present time, no spirit being has ever been destroyed. Thus far they have only been curtailed, imprisoned, or put under house arrest. However, the time will come when incorrigible spirit beings will be destroyed. Meanwhile, Satan continues with his evil plans, thinking that some day he will be successful.

**Q:** Do verses 26-29 prophesy of the end result? Eventually the Jews will really return to God, as shown in the last chapter of Hosea. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found" (Hos. 14:8).

**A:** No matter what happens in the interim, Israel will end with a wonderful blessing.

**Comment:** Ideally these verses were meant to apply to the Israelites even back in Moses' day if they had been faithful. Thus the promises apply to the time in which they were given, as well as in the future. Knowing the end from the beginning, God realized that Israel would continue to disobey down through the ages.

**Reply:** That is true. If the promises had been acted upon, the nation would have received immediate blessings back there. God foretold Israel's disobedience and stiff-necked condition, yet one day in the future, the people will ask for forgiveness. God will forgive them at that time, which will be the opening of the Kingdom Age.

**Deut. 34:1** And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

**Deut. 34:2** And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

**Deut. 34:3** And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

"Mount Nebo" is really a mountain range, and on the promontory that is traditionally called Nebo, there is a lookout for tourists who come from the capital of Amman, Jordan. Adjoining it on another hillside—very, very close—is a Catholic institution. We feel that Pisgah is probably the promontory Moses ascended. He went "to the top of Pisgah" in "the mountain of Nebo," showing that the mountain range has various fingers, or promontories, from which one can get a view.

From Pisgah, the territories of the various tribes were visible to Moses. On a very clear day, one can see practically all of Israel proper, including at least a portion of Judah, all the way out to the Mediterranean Sea, which is quite a distance. To see Zoar, Moses had to look from Pisgah to the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. Incidentally, Zoar could not be seen from the traditional Mount Nebo.

God first "showed him [Moses] all the land of Gilead," which was to the right. By looking



northward, Moses could see all of Transjordan, for Gilead is part of northern Jordan. Of course Dan was the tribe farthest north, so Moses could look up to that particular territory. It was as if God was showing the land to a friend before putting him to sleep. Moses climbed Pisgah with the purpose of being buried, for he had finished his ministry. Just before he died, God took him on a tour to this spot, from which he got a beautiful view. Therefore, we can imagine the day was extraordinarily clear. For God to so honor Moses shows not only that he was the servant of Jehovah but that God appreciated his work and ministry. Stated another way, although Moses could not enter the Promised Land, God granted his deathbed wish and allowed him to see it all. This condescending favor showed that Moses still had the Lord's approval.

To see all of Naphtali, Moses was now looking toward the Sea of Galilee. First, he looked north on the right, or the Transjordan side. Next he began to look to the left, and the Sea of Galilee was quite a distance north. Then Moses looked a little more to the left and saw Ephraim and Manasseh. As we analyze these verses, we see that Moses was given an orderly panoramic view. As he looked west, he faced more toward Jerusalem and a portion of Judah, which embraced the whole shoreline of the Dead Sea on the other side of the Jordan River. Finally, Moses looked toward Zoar in the south.

Zoar is where Lot fled at the time of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction (Gen. 19:22,23). At one time, the valley of Jericho was a very fruitful plain, which is the reason Lot chose that land (Gen. 13:10,11). By separating, Abraham and Lot had room for their flocks and thus avoided potential friction. As Lot looked down on this well-watered plain, he thought the land was beautiful and made that his selection. After the destruction through a tremendous earthquake, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were buried, and it is believed they are underneath the waters of the Dead Sea. The Jordan River filled the ravine that opened up, so that it became like a lake, which we call the Dead Sea. At one time, we believe there was an exit at the bottom end of the Dead Sea—a connection with Eilat and the Red Sea and then the Arabian Sea. In other words, fresh water was going through the fertile plain. Thus Moses was looking below him at the former valley of Jericho, and then he turned and looked all the way south unto Zoar, which was the farthest extremity in that direction.

**Deut. 34:4** And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

**Comment:** There is a pathos to this situation, as we consider what Moses' emotions must have been.

The experience of Moses is somewhat like that of the Christian Church in the present life. Those who are called to be kings and priests are given a panoramic view of the Promised Land and told what their function will be in the next age, how they will open blind eyes and heal the sick, and that they will be judges sitting on 12 thrones with the 12 apostles. All of these insights are a preview, or foretaste, of things to come in the next life for those who are faithful. Like Moses, the Church have to be put to sleep and buried before they enter the Promised Land in reality, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

**Deut. 34:5** So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

**Deut. 34:6** And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

**Comment:** A *Reprint* article states that God wisely hid the sepulcher because Moses was so

revered that his bones would have been exhumed and used as a relic.

When we were on Mount Nebo, we thought of these Scriptures. Moses was taken to the mount, but he was buried in the valley below. We went over to the edge of the mount and looked down, and what we saw in the cleft was very interesting. However, the next promontory was even more interesting because no one could get into that spot without first going by water. Almost all bodies of water have a footpath or something along the shoreline, but in this case, there was no land shelf. The nature of the decline was such that it ended abruptly in the sea. That place was ideal, for not many tourists would go to that location. A boat would be needed to get in there, and then, when a person arrived, he would need climbing equipment. Somewhere down there is the body of Moses.

It is interesting—and significant—that the bodies of Moses, Jesus, and Elijah were never found. In addition, Enoch was translated. One suggestion or picture is of a change of nature. Not only does the Pastor have two articles in the *Reprints* on the subject, but it is our personal belief that Enoch and Elijah are alive today in a place provided of God. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus with his garments changed so that they shone and became transcendently white and glorious, described as being “white as the light” (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2,3). Moses, who pictured the Ancient Worthies, and Elijah, representing the Little Flock, were seen in vision talking with Jesus. The subject matter was Jesus’ decease, which would shortly occur. We believe the Mount of Transfiguration was Mount Tabor in northern Israel. From there, Jesus began his journey south to Jericho and then to Jerusalem to be crucified.

The Pastor suggested in short comments in the *Reprints* that the Ancient Worthies will ultimately receive a spiritual resurrection, and he presented a scriptural line of reasoning for this thought. First, however, they will be princes in the earth on behalf of The Christ. For that period of time, they will have perfect human nature, but at the end of the Millennium, they will receive a change to spirit nature. Bro. Russell suggested three Scriptures to support this thought, the Mount of Transfiguration being one. Other pictures corroborate this point.

**Q:** Is there a particular meaning to Beth-peor?

**A:** Beth-peor is where Balaam was called to pronounce a curse on the children of Israel, but when he tried to do so, he could not. Instead his words ended up as a blessing on Israel and a beautiful prophecy, which angered King Balak. “I will advertise [to] thee [King Balak] what this people [Israel] shall do to thy people in the latter days. And he [Balaam] took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor ... which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth” (Num. 24:14-17). Nevertheless, as recorded in Numbers 31:15,16, Balaam evidently told King Balak privately how to cause a curse to come on the nation of Israel, namely, by having the daughters of Moab marry the Israelite men. Of course the Moabite women would continue to worship their heathen gods, thereby drawing Israelites away from Jehovah. God’s displeasure at this disobedience resulted in the death of many Israelites in Beth-peor shortly before the rest of the nation entered the Promised Land. Now Moses was in the land of Moab, and Beth-peor was in the same location.

“But no man knoweth of his [Moses’] sepulchre unto this day.”

**Comment:** Jude 9 reads, “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” Therefore, we know that Satan was watching the circumstances of

Moses' death. Obviously, he watched the happenings with Enoch and Elijah as well, so we can imagine the providential protection that has been provided.

**Reply:** Yes. Satan may not have known the exact location of Moses' tomb, but he certainly investigated and tried to secure the body. At that point, Jesus stepped in and said in *strong* language, "The Lord rebuke thee."

**Deut. 34:7** And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

Moses was 120 years old when he died, and we feel that number is significant, for Moses represents The Christ, the body or humanity of which will not be found. Psalm 87:5 reads, "And of Zion it shall be said, This [man] and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her." In other words, inquiry will be made in the Kingdom as to the whereabouts of the individuals comprising the 144,000. When the awakening from the tomb takes place, these individuals will be missed by some of the people down here, so they will ask, "What happened to so-and-so?" They will be informed as to who received the spiritual resurrection to the divine nature. The time parallel of 120 years seems to fit in with the period of time at the end of the age just prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, when Israel crosses into the Land of Promise. Before the Kingdom on earth can be set up, the last members of The Christ have to die.

The fact that Moses' eyesight was not dimmed nor his strength abated tells us that the final members of the Church will not die a natural death. They will be cut off in death. In order for the Church to be complete at a particular tick of the clock, the feet members will have to go off the scene at a certain time. When Elijah was translated and Moses was buried, both individuals represented a *class*, that is, the last members (*plural*) of the Church. In other words, there will not be a last member of the body of Christ because that abnormality would distract from the prominence of the Head. If that happened, everyone would logically say, "Christ is the Head, and Brother [or Sister] so-and-so is the end," just as the saying in Israel was, "From Dan to Beer-sheba." To our understanding, several Scriptures nullify the thought of one last member. The *class* of feet members will be cut off, some in the very prime of life. Their death will have nothing to do with a *natural* health problem. We tend to be enamored with the thought of how strong Moses was at age 120 and what a wonderful specimen of humanity he was. That is true, but the real point is his representation of the feet members.

**Q:** Is the thought, then, that the last members will not die of old age?

**A:** They will die a violent death. The heel members of the Church will be bruised, whoever they are (Gen. 3:15). Inferential reasoning shows that the last members of the Great Company will also die a violent death, although they will not be dealt with in the same way. Their death will be a short work. Let us say there will be 100,000 of the Great Company class at that time. We do not think they will all die at the tick of a clock, but perhaps their demise will occur in one day. However, the Church, an elect class, is another matter. There will be very few feet members at the end of the age, and they will have to go off the scene together. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up together* with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

**Deut. 34:8** And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

What a wonderful tribute to Moses! In spite of the earlier murmuring, when he was gone, the children of Israel sorely missed him and wept and mourned for 30 days. He tried to make his

transfer as smooth as possible, for he complimented Joshua and told the people not to fear. Moses' attitude was, "It was not I who led you to the Land of Promise but the Lord. The same will be true of Joshua, for God will be with him." Thus, in spite of conditions of isolation that Christians get into when they are cut off in any way through peculiar trials, it is the Lord in the final analysis, especially Jesus Christ as the High Priest and Caretaker of the Church, who is looking out for their spiritual interests.

**Deut. 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.**

Joshua, who "was full of the spirit of wisdom," represented Jesus. In fact, "Joshua" is the Hebrew equivalent of "Jesus." In the Kingdom Age, the world of mankind will be placed in the custody of Jesus, for God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). Not until the end of the Millennial Age will the Kingdom be transferred back to the Father. After the Son has put all things under his feet, he will give the Kingdom to the Father. We can see the potential here that in the next age, and for countless millions and millions of times in future years in all the universe, the story of earth will be shown as an educational film. Innumerable pictures and types will be narrated, and certain unnamed individuals will be given the privilege of putting the film together at that time for the benefit of the public—whether as the narrator or as the mixer of sound and music or whatever. In these educational programs, the history of mankind on earth will be reviewed and explained with a *fullness* of understanding.

There will be many offices in the Kingdom—an abundance of opportunities for Christians, whatever their talents might be, in a perfect divine body. We think the proclivities of the present life will be carried over. For example, if a person can sing or play a musical instrument very beautifully, he will probably have that same type of talent and capability in the resurrection, but then it will be gloriously perfected. In fact, that will be true whether one receives earthly restitution, spirit nature, or divine nature. Just to have divine nature does not mean one will know and be able to do everything. Although the divine nature is an undying, immortal nature with the capability of giving life to others, the recipients of that nature will still be able to explore and enjoy certain avenues for eternity.

**Q:** Since Moses laid his hands on Joshua to impart wisdom, and Joshua pictures Jesus, does Moses represent God in that instance?

**A:** Yes. In fact, Moses represents God in many places.

"Israel hearkened unto him [Joshua], and did as the LORD commanded Moses." In the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, Moses pictured Jesus in the role of mediator. Just as Moses was the mediator of the old Law Covenant, so in the next age, Jesus will be the Mediator of the New Covenant. However, each picture has to be kept separate and distinct because Moses definitely represents God in some cases in the wilderness in connection with the Tabernacle. But he also pictures Jesus, The Christ, and the Second Death class depending on the perspective being considered.

In the Kingdom, Jesus will be doing the New Covenant work under the figure of Joshua. Under the old Law Covenant, Jesus was the representative of God, for example, in leading the Israelites as the "angel" of the cloud.

**Comment:** Numbers 27:18-23 is the account where Moses laid his hands on Joshua.

**Reply:** That was the earlier occasion, for Moses seems to have given the charge to Joshua a second time. As stated in Numbers and also in Deuteronomy 31:7,8, Moses gave the charge in a formalized sense on two occasions, although the second time was brief, for Moses was about to go up into the mountain to be put to sleep.

This flashback technique is used throughout the Bible. When we read succeeding verses of any particular picture, they are not necessarily talking about something that occurred subsequently, for sometimes they are a flashback. Appreciating that technique, the translators often inserted paragraph marks. Here, however, we believe the charge was duplicated in a very brief manner. Certainly Moses was 120 years old when he died, and God hid the body where it could not be found. Then, all of a sudden, Moses was blessing Joshua, so we know the blessing is a flashback—probably to Deuteronomy 31:7,8, the charge just before Moses' death. Before the whole nation, Moses took an occasion to compliment Joshua and point him out as the successor. He commended Joshua as being a man after God's own heart and told him to be strong and of good courage in the sight of all the people. Thus the first charge did not prohibit Moses from again laying his hands on Joshua just before leaving to go up into the mount.

Now Moses would separate himself from the people. Joshua was next to him as his right-hand man. Aaron and Miriam were both dead, so except for Caleb, Joshua was the only carryover of those who were close to Moses. Therefore, when Moses separated from the people, he first separated from Joshua. The people saw Moses go as he climbed up the mountain in the sight of the nation.

Although the account is not a parallel, we are reminded of the ascension of Jesus on the Mount of Olives in the sight of the apostles. They watched him going up to heaven until two angels said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye [here] gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). We draw this allusion because God has His own method of using types, figures, symbols, and pictures. In proportion as we know an individual, we know certain characteristics and idiosyncrasies that are a part of his makeup. For example, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you," and Paul said, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren." Moreover, Jesus was recognized after his resurrection by the way he blessed the bread. And so God's method of dealing with His people—His language, vocabulary, and technique—is manifest. Even God Himself exhibited a pattern of behavior, speech, and dealing with His little ones.

**Deut. 34:10** And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

**Deut. 34:11** In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,

**Deut. 34:12** And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.

The Pentateuch closes with these words. What a wonderful epitaph for Moses, the servant of God, referring to his great deeds in Egypt and subsequently with the children of Israel in the wilderness! Verse 12 mentions "all the great terror," that is, the awesome signs and miracles performed through Moses as an instrument of the Lord "in the sight of all Israel." Just as the Pentateuch begins majestically with the statement "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," so it closes with a nice reverential statement befitting the five books.

**Q:** What is the thought of the phrase "And in all that mighty hand" (verse 12)?

**A:** The “mighty hand” can be for good or for evil. For example, the expression “with a stretched out arm” shows *power* (Exod. 6:6; Psa. 136:12; Jer. 32:21). The very gesture suggests that the hand is held up with strength and power. The question would be, Were the signs and wonders—the miracles that Jehovah did through Moses with regard to his rod—for good or for evil? The answer would depend on the viewpoint. The Egyptians considered that the ten plagues were the mighty hand of the Hebrew God being raised against them. However, for the Israelites, who were on the other side of the picture, the plagues were mighty deeds that worked for good. The mighty opening of the Red Sea, making a pathway, was awesome in the sight of both the Israelites who were delivered and the perishing Egyptians. Certainly when the waters cascaded down, the Egyptian host knew what was happening just prior to their death. First, they saw a dry roadway through the Red Sea, and they used it to pursue the Israelites. When the chariot wheels started to get stuck in the mud, it was as if a hand grabbed them. The wagons of the Israelites also had wheels, for they were transporting their belongings over dry, firm ground. Therefore, the *same* mighty hand can be *for* one people and *against* another. In many cases, the antagonists and the protagonists are on the scene at the same time. At the very end of this age, in the Gog and Magog setting, God’s fury will rise up in His face, and He will fight as “in the day of battle” in the past (Ezek. 38:18; Zech. 14:3). These yet future indications of the hand of God will be *powerful*. Of course the power will be exercised through the arm of Jehovah, that is, The Christ.

Isaiah 53:1 asks, “To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Basically, that chapter of Isaiah pertains to Jesus as the “man of sorrows,” but in considering this expression in verse 1, we can see a larger picture of deliverance in which the Church will share. Obadiah 21 calls the Church “saviours” (plural). “And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.” The great deliverer who comes out of Zion to deliver Jacob is The Christ, Head and body members.