

EXODUS

WRITER

The writer who was inspired to write this Old Testament document was Moses (See Ex 17:14). We have no reason to doubt Jesus' statement that Moses was indeed the writer (Mk 1:44; see Jn 5:46,47; 7:19-22; At 26:22). Moses lived his first forty years in Egypt in preparation to carry out God's plan to lead Israel out of Egyptian captivity. Being reared in the Egyptian palace by the daughter of Pharaoh, Moses was trained in all the skills of Egyptian leadership. When he fled for refuge to the wilderness, Moses spent another forty years in learning the skills of desert dwelling at the feet of his father-in-law, Jethro. Once called by God to deliver Israel, Moses then spent another forty years using his skills of leadership to lead the freed nation of Israel to the promised land. (See also, introduction to Genesis.)

BOOK

The key thought of this book is "deliverance." Chapter 3:7,8 indicates the purpose of the book and 12:13 explains how God redeemed Israel out of captivity.

The word "Exodus" means "to go out." The name comes from the name of the book in the Greek Septuagint, though the Jews referred to the book with the word "*Shemoth*" which means "names."

It is commonly assumed that the Pentateuch, including Exodus, was written during the wandering of Israel in the wilderness, prior to the entrance of the nation into Canaan. The book was thus written sometime between 1,445 and 1,400 B.C.

This book is a continuation of the history of the book of Genesis. The history of the book begins with the death of Joseph, and continues to the time when the tabernacle was set up at the foot of Mt. Sinai. From the death of Joseph to the erection of the tabernacle at the foot of Mt. Sinai would be a period of about 360 years. When studying the book of Exodus, it is important to have an understanding of the book of Genesis, since God's work with mankind is continued in Exodus.

It might be said that the book of Exodus is a metaphor of God's redemption work with all mankind. The literal definition of the metaphor "redemption" is found in the nation of Israel that was in bondage in Egypt. The Israelites could not deliver themselves. It was necessary, therefore, that through His grace, God redeemed Israel from their bondage. As the children of Abraham by faith, all believers have been delivered by the grace of God from their bondage in sin (See 1 Co 10:1-12). Exodus is thus the book of redemption in the Old Testament, explaining how God delivers His people from that which they cannot deliver themselves.

Because the book is about the deliverance of Israel from the captivity of Israel, the historical event, and its metaphorical application, set the prophetic stage for types that are used in reference to the Redeemer, Jesus, who was yet to come in history after the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Moses was a deliverer, lawgiver and prophet, and so would be the Christ (Dt 18:15-18). In this book the Passover lamb is sacrificed, which sacrifice Jesus would also make for the sins of men in the future (Ex 12:6; 1 Co 5,7,8). Living bread was given to sustain Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16:4), and such Christ would spiritually be to all those who would come to Him (Jn 6:48-51). Moses smote the rock from which Israel drank living water in the wilderness (Ex 17:6). Jesus is now the living water from which we drink and live (1 Co 10:4). The veil of the physical tabernacle was that through which Jesus spiritually went for the atonement of our sins (Hb 10:19,20). He passed through the veil as our high priest. This was a type from Aaron under the Levitical system who went every year into the Most Holy Place for the atonement of the sins of the people (Ex 28:36-41; Hb 7:23-28; 9:11).

Israel In Bondage In Egypt

(1:1 - 5:23)

Outline: (1) Oppression of Israel (1:1-22), (2) Birth and early life of Moses (2:1 – 4:31), (3) Oppression of Israel (5:1-23)

Chapter 1

OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

1:1-7 *These are the names:* God knows His people by name (See 6:14-26; Gn 35:23-26; 46:8-26). The eleven people mentioned here (vs 2-4), with Joseph who was already in Egypt at the time of their arrival, make up the twelve sons of Jacob. *Joseph died, and all his brothers:* This is the natural passing of the leadership of the nation of Israel. The legacy of the leadership of these brothers was at this time passed on to their children. The successful spiritual leadership of the fathers is made known by the spiritual leadership of their children.

In this case, after their repentance, it seems that Joseph's brothers left a good legacy for their sons to follow. ***Increased abundantly:*** This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, that his children would be as the stars of heaven (Gn 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-8). By the time of the exodus of Egypt, there were about 600,000 men in Israel. Including women and children, there could have been as many as 3,000,000 who left Egypt in the exodus (See 12:37). ***Exceedingly mighty:*** Not only did they increase in number, but the phrase here seems to indicate that they were a nation of health, vigor, and thus physical strength (See Dt 26:5). ***The land was filled:*** This poses the first threat to Pharaoh. The land of Goshen that was first given to Israel in Egypt had at this time become greatly populated with the mighty nation of Israel. Through the help of God Israel greatly increased in numbers, and thus

became a threat to the nation of Egypt.

1:8-14 The strength of the nation of Israel moved the new king of Egypt to take measures to oppress those he assumed would be a threat to Egypt. The great strength of Israel intimidated the king of Egypt. **New king ... did not know Joseph:** The Hyksos dynasty, which dynasty was composed of foreign kings, ruled Egypt from about 1720 to 1570 B.C. It was probably during this dynasty of Pharaohs (kings) that Joseph came to power in Egypt. However, the “new king,” or 18th dynasty of Egypt, disassociated Egypt from the former kings and those with whom they associated. Under this new dynasty of kings, therefore, Israel, as a part of the past of Egypt, was subjected to slavery. When the nationalism of Egypt was stirred up by the reign of Egyptian kings, the Israelites were made foreigners in the land of their birth. Though in Egypt for over four hundred years, they were made foreigners by the rise in nationalism among the Egyptians. This would not be the entire fault of the Egyptians. Since the Israelites were encouraged not to intermarry with the Egyptians, the Israelites retained their nationhood while in Egypt. For this reason the Egyptians saw the Israelites as a nation within their nation, and thus a threat to their national security. **Fight against us:** When evil men seek to raise the people against someone or some people, they will invent slanderous accusations against their supposed enemies. They will develop hate against their supposed enemy by slanderous remarks. Israel was not a warlike nation. She was a nation

of shepherds. But the insecure Pharaoh of Egypt saw a threat in the Israelites' numbers and strength. **Treasure cities:** These were cities for storing provisions. The Egyptians possibly remembered the days of the famine of Joseph's era, and thus built cities for the storage of grain. **Taskmasters:** These often cruel foremen supervised the work of the enslaved Israelites in order that they perform the work desired by the leadership of Egypt. Though Israel was oppressed, they as a nation continued to grow strong. God's work is manifested better when one is under oppression. **They were in fear:** Because the Egyptians could not perceive the work of God among the Israelites, they were fearful of what they saw in Israel's growth. The circumstances of Egypt's cruelty of the Israelites would normally hinder the multiplying of the nation. But in the case of Israel, the more cruel the taskmasters were, the more Israel grew. Israel saw this as the work of God, but Egypt saw it as a threat to their national security.

1:15-22 Because the Egyptians could not stop the growth of Israel through cruel slavery, they resorted to genocide of the infants. **Kill:** By killing the males, the females could be amalgamated into the Egyptian society, resulting in the end of Israel as a nation. By killing the males, they thought they would force the females to intermarry with Egyptian men. **Hebrew women ... lively:** They gave birth before the arrival of the midwives, and thus hid away their male babies before the arrival of the executioners. **Midwives ... households:** Because

they feared God, the midwives were blessed with families themselves. Because they feared God, they possibly became a part of the greater Israelite nation. **Every son ... cast into the river:** Since the writer does not specifically mention the Hebrew sons, it is possible that by this time many of the Israelites had amalgamated into the Egyptian society. In order that the birth of male Israelites not continue, in his desperation, Pharaoh commanded that every male baby be drowned.

Chapter 2

BIRTH & EARLY LIFE OF MOSES

2:1-10 The purpose of the genocide of the Israelite babies was to destroy the nation of Israel. But for those who were perceptive to the prophecies that Israel would eventually come out of their captivity in order to receive the land promised to Abraham, they knew that the end of the captivity was near. They did not know, however, that it was at least forty years away when Moses would return from his stay at Sinai in order to deliver them from captivity. Neither did they know that they would be condemned for forty years of wandering in the wilderness before coming into the land of promise. **House of Levi:** Miriam was born into this priestly family (vs 4; Nm 26:59). Aaron, Moses' brother, was born about three years before Moses (6:20; Nm 26:59). **A beautiful child:** It was the faith of the parents that led to the preservation of Moses (Hb 11:23). **See what would happen:** Moses' mother was trusting in the providential care of God. She

placed the basket where it would be discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh. She also placed Miriam in a place where she would also be discovered, and thus possibly asked where to find a nursing mother. Moses' survival, therefore, was the product of a mother's faith. **Take this child and nurse it for me:** In the household of a tyrannical leader as Pharaoh, there was one who had compassion. Little did Pharaoh know that within his own house he would be bringing up the child who would eventually lead the Israelites to freedom out of Egyptian bondage.

2:11-15 An Egyptian beating a Hebrew: At this age in his life, Moses knew the difference between Egyptians and Hebrews. Evidently his mother had taught him who he was and the moral principle that all men are created equal in the eyes of God. Because of the extent to which he went in delivering the Hebrew from the Egyptian, he had strong feelings concerning the equality of all men. **Slew the Egyptian:** Moses acted on his own, without sanction from either government or God. Because he thought his deed would be without the knowledge of others, he acted on his own to deliver the Hebrew. **Who made you a prince:** Because of the accusation against Moses by a fellow Hebrew, it is evident that the time was not right for their deliverance. If his fellow Hebrews would not support him, then certainly the nation as a whole did not feel the need at this time for their own deliverance from Egypt. **Moses fled:** Because he felt insecure about who he was, he fled to Midian where he stayed for forty years (At 7:30).

2:16-25 The Midianites were relatives to the Hebrews for their existence came from Abraham through Keturah (Gn 25:1-4). Moses thus dwelt among a people who knew the one true God of heaven. The Midianites dwelt around Mt. Sinai. This mountain was also known as Horeb (3:1). **Priest of Midian:** God not only worked among the Israelites, but he also worked among all people, working through priests among the Gentiles throughout the world at this time (See Hb 1:1,2). The priest of Midian in this case was Reuel who was also known as Jethro (3:1; 4:18). **Seven daughters:** This priest was certainly not celibate as some would demand of this position. In this case, Moses defended the daughters of Jethro in order that their herds be watered. **Egyptian:** It is interesting that they first identified Moses as an Egyptian, indicating that their identification of him as such was either by his clothing or language, or both. **Ziporah ... Gershom:** Moses' kindness on this occasion led to a home, wife and children. **Israel groaned:** The bondage of Israel became more oppressive during the time Moses was in the Sinai. In order to keep the Hebrews in subjection, the Egyptians subjugated them to harsh labor. All this worked toward God's purpose of delivering Israel from bondage. Before Israel would be led to freedom by Moses, they first had to desire freedom. **God remembered:** He remembered the covenant He had with Abraham. The nation would be brought forth because of His promise to Abraham. They would be brought forth from bondage when they realized that there was no

permanent home in Egypt. Their nationhood, therefore, depended on their understanding that they could never be a nation in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 3

3:1-6 Moses was forty years old when he fled Egypt (At 7:23). He was eighty years old when he stood before the Lord at the burning bush (At 7:30). He was thus eighty years old when he returned to stand before Pharaoh. **Horeb:** Some have suggested that this is a range of mountains wherein Mt. Sinai is a single mountain. It is known that these mountains are in the Sinai Peninsula, though it is not known which mountain is the actual mountain on which Moses stood. **Angel of the Lord:** Some have suggested that this is the preexistent Christ, though this is not indicated in the text, for the Christ would not be made known to man until approximately 1,400 years after these events. **Holy ground:** Where God would appear on earth in order to communicate with man would be a parcel of earth that would be set aside for a special purpose. It was holy ground for the purpose of God making this call of Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. The people were now ready for deliverance, and the man whom God had selected was ready to deliver them.

3:7-12 It is here that God started His providential plan to move Israel into the next stage of their history. The nation was developed in Egypt. It is now that He seeks to move the nation to their own land. He is doing this in order to preserve this segment of humanity (the na-

tion of Israel) for the coming of the Christ in the centuries that would follow. ***A land flowing with milk and honey:*** It was a land whose inhabitants had now digressed to the point of no moral return (See Gn 15:16-21). It would be a land that would supply Israel for all its needs until the coming of the Messiah and Redeemer of the world. ***I will send you:*** In this case God chose to work through men, not angels, to accomplish His plans among men. ***Who Am I:*** The inferiority complex of Moses is here revealed as he sees the tremendous task to which God is commissioning him. His life as a shepherd had humbled him, and thus he felt that the task of leading a nation to freedom was certainly an impossible assignment for a shepherd. But it is in our weaknesses that God is able to perform His greatness. And it is through the spirit of a shepherd that His might is revealed. ***I will be with you:*** Moses drew back from the mission because he focused on his own abilities. But this deliverance of Israel would not be the work of someone who exercised leadership skills. It would be the work of God. The fact that God used a shepherd to lead a nation demonstrated that He was working through the shepherd. ***This will be a token to you:*** Or, “a sign to you.” When the nation of Israel would eventually be at the foot of Mt. Sinai, then Moses would truly understand that Israel’s deliverance was the work of God. Our faith is strengthened when we finally realized that all that we have done is the work of God in our lives. When we finally understand that it is not about us, but about

bringing glory to God, then our faith is increased in the power of God to work through us. The sooner one realizes this in his or her own life, the better he or she will work for God.

3:13-22 *What is His name?* Moses knew that he was returning to a culture where men had created many gods after their own imagination. Each of the Egyptian gods had a name, and thus Moses wanted a name by which to identify the God he was representing. The occasion here showed that Moses was not creating a god after his own imagination. He was reluctant to obey this God who called him to do this great task. When men would later read this account of what actually happened, they would conclude that Moses did not create this God in his own mind. On the contrary, it was the true God of heaven who took the initiative to create the vision of Israel’s freedom in Moses’ mind. ***I am that I am:*** The tense of the verb here is indefinite, which naturally would be the verb to express the God who is yesterday, today and tomorrow (See Rv 1:8). God here introduced Himself by His eternal nature. His eternity assumes His power, and thus when discussing the concept of God, Bible students must understand the fact that because God is eternal, He is omnipotent (all-powerful). Since the statement, “I am that I am” is a translation from a form of the Hebrew word, *Yahweh*, and the fact that this word is used in Genesis 4:26 (also Gn 6:3), the name was known for centuries as the God of Israel. It is not that God needs a name by which to be identified. He existed

before man, and thus before the imagined gods that men create after their own image, to whom they also assigned a name. The name here is given in order to describe who God is in His eternal existence and power. **Three days' journey:** God knew that Pharaoh would resist this request. But the request would initially inform the Israelites that their deliverance from bondage in Egypt would not be easy for the Egyptians. Though God gave Pharaoh every opportunity to cooperate, He knew that the pride and arrogance of Pharaoh would stand against His request, and thus Israel would be given an opportunity to see the marvelous power of God over the magicians and their trickery to deceive the people. **All my wonders:** It was necessary that God manifest His power over all that man had to offer in reference to the tricks of men who presumed to control the spirit world. The manifestation of true miracles would be a testimony to Israel and all the world forever that there is no miraculous power manifested outside the work of God. The eternal nature of God assumes that supernatural power exists only with Him. **Plunder the Egyptians:** This would be Israel's payment for their slavery by the Egyptians. The plagues that would come would be so severe that the Egyptian people would give of their goods in order that the Hebrews leave their land. We must keep this in mind, for it is here that God would allow the Israelites to collect all the material that they would later use in the construction of the tabernacle.

Chapter 4

4:1-9 *They will not believe me:*

Moses here again reveals his insecurity about his leadership. He knew that the Hebrews would have a difficult time believing that after forty years he represented the God in whom they believed. God understood his feelings. So in order to reassure Moses, as well as convince the Hebrews that he represented God, he gave Moses three signs. The three signs that are mentioned here signify the lessons that Israel would soon learn: **Staff:** The staff (rod) of the shepherd represented the leadership, care and protection of a shepherd. Under God's direction, Moses would be the leader by which He would manifest His care and protection for His people. **Hand ... leprosy:** The lesson here is surely that God would care for their physical well-being. God would not only provide the leadership of a shepherd, He would also take care of His people with manna and quail. **Blood:** With great struggle they would be delivered. God would bring judgment and retribution on the nation of Egypt in order to give birth to the nation of Israel.

What is interesting about the evidence that Moses was to take back to Egypt were the signs that God gave him to prove that he was a messenger of God. Moses did not take to Egypt as evidence his personal encounter with God on Mt. Sinai. Since personal experiences are often the subjective conclusions of those who experience them, God does not allow personal experiences to be evidence

for His existence. God uses true miracles as evidence for belief. These are clearly perceived miracles that are worked before the eyes of those He seeks to move to belief. The personal experiences of Moses were not the foundation upon which the unbelievers in Egypt were to be moved to belief.

4:10-17 *Slow of speech:* It seems that Moses was very hesitant about accepting his destiny. God had reassured him that the signs would convince the people. But now Moses in his excuses turns to himself by focusing on his own inadequacies. ***By whomever else:*** Moses here sought to excuse himself from the mission, as is so common among those who are asked to go forth to take the message of God to the world. But little did Moses know that he was the one chosen by God to change the world forever. Through such people God seeks to accomplish His mission of taking the gospel into all the world.

4:18-23 *Return to my brethren:* Moses did not at first reveal all that God had said and done on the mountain. But enough information was given to secure the approval of his father-in-law. ***Dead:*** God reassured Moses that Pharaoh and those who sought to kill him had since died in Egypt. Fear for his life from them would not be an obstacle to the accomplishment of his mission. ***Wife and sons:*** It is apparent that the sons of Zipporah and Moses accompanied Moses part way on his journey, as was a custom of the day. But when Moses knew that it was time for him to go alone, he sent his family back to Jethro. He knew he would

see them again, but in the company of a nation of Hebrews. ***Wonders before Pharaoh:*** The miracles that God would work before Pharaoh would leave Pharaoh without excuse. The fact that God would have to go to the extreme of miraculous plagues revealed the extent to which Pharaoh hardened his heart against God. The miracles became the occasions for the hardened heart of Pharaoh to be revealed. In this way, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. ***Firstborn:*** If Pharaoh refused to allow God to have His firstborn (the nation of Israel), He would take the firstborn of Egypt. Thus Pharaoh's judgment not to give up Israel, God's firstborn, was Pharaoh's judgment against his own firstborn.

4:24-26 We are not given all the details concerning what is here in the background concerning the rite of circumcision and Moses' neglect to circumcise his second son. Though we understand that God is here teaching Moses that His commands must be strictly obeyed, there may have been some conflict between Zipporah and Moses in reference to the rite of circumcision. The firstborn of Moses had been circumcised. However, it is apparent that the second son was not circumcised. Either out of Moses' neglect, or possibly because Zipporah did not want him circumcised, the second son remained uncircumcised. That Moses was negligent in circumcising the second son is probably the case, and thus God used Zipporah to remind Moses that he must get his own house in order before he could go to the circumcised of God, the nation of Israel (See comments At 16:3).

4:27-31 Aaron: Not only did God appear to Moses, but He also appeared to the one who would be the first high priest of Israel. Aaron met Moses on the mountain where God had appeared to Moses, after which the two set out for Egypt. **Signs:** Once they arrived in Egypt, they first gathered the spiritual leaders (elders) of the people, and then met before the people and reassured them through the signs that God was with Moses. **They ... worshiped:** When one realizes the presence of God, he worships. The spontaneous worship on the part of the people here defines worship. It is not something one does in order to receive something, but something that is given to God by devout people in response to His awesome being. Self-centered entertainment meetings that are defined as worship are vain and the product of a people who seek gratification for their own amusements. True worship is poured out from the hearts of those who bow before an awesome God.

Chapter 5

OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL

5:1-5 God had prepared the leadership, Moses and Aaron, for the deliverance of Israel. He had prepared the people to be delivered through suffering and the initial signs of Moses before the people. And now it was time to prepare Pharaoh for the birth of a nation. **Let My people go:** For all those who are in the bondage of sin and men, God's call is that His people be set free. Since the Hebrews had been in Egypt for over 400 years, it would have been natural for Pharaoh to

believe that the people belong to him. The Pharaohs were not put in power by the choice of the people, and thus they, as all dictators, assume that the people belong to them. ***I do not know the Lord:*** Though he knew all the gods of the Egyptians, he did not know the one true and living God. He was thus to be taught by the plagues that there is only one God. ***Sacrifice to the Lord:*** As all autocratic and self-centered leaders, they find it hard to believe that those over whom they rule have a spiritual nature and the right to control their own destiny. To Pharaoh, the request to go sacrifice in the desert was only an attempt of his slaves to forsake their work for idleness.

5:6-9 More work: Pharaoh's first response to the request of Moses was an effort to break the will of the people. Little did he understand at this time the confrontation that he was working was against God, not man. **Straw:** Straw was used in making the sun-dried bricks. Unlike oven-baked bricks of today, straw was used to make the sun-dried bricks stronger. The Hebrews' work was increased when they had to gather their own straw, as well as maintain the same daily quota of bricks. **The officers:** These were Hebrew foremen who were chosen by the Egyptians as taskmasters over their fellow Hebrews. If the quota of bricks was not met, they too were beaten.

5:10-23 All the land of Egypt: In order to secure the straw that was needed for the making of the bricks, the laborers had to go throughout the land of Egypt. We must understand, therefore, that the

time that takes place during the making of the bricks with their own supply of straw, is taking place over a period of several weeks. In our study of these events, we must understand that the events of the plagues took place over several months throughout all Egypt. ***Odi-ous in the eyes of Pharaoh:*** The people did not understand the struggle they would have to go through in order to be delivered from bondage. Giving birth to a nation takes pain on the part of the nation itself. At this time, a sociological paradigm shift was about to happen in their lives. And when paradigm shifts happen in society, there is great social pain with the change. In changing from a society of bondage and slavery, to a paradigm of freedom, not only would their social governance structure change, but they as a culture of Hebrews would also change. For this reason, much social chaos would take place in the culture of Israel in the years to come after their deliverance. But this social chaos was necessary in order to transform the Israelite's "bondage mentality" to a culture of freedom. Knowing this helps us to understand why God led Moses to forty years of preparation in desert living in the wilderness of Sinai before he was sent to deliver Israel. Moses would be the cultural bridge that would help Israel to transition from the bondage culture of Egypt to a culture of freedom. For forty years in the wilderness the nation would go through this change. God's reason for the forty years of wandering in the wilderness of the desert until those who were twenty years of age and over

had died, was to filter out of the Israelite society those who would hang on to the past and refuse to change for the future. This tremendous social paradigm shift was now beginning to take place as God worked to bring the culture of Israel out of the bondage culture of Egypt. In such a drastic change, there is always social pain. But out of the pain comes forth a new nation. God did the same with the church of the first century. From the birth of the church in A.D. 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He transitioned the church out of the bondage of Jewish legalism over a period of forty years until He took the center of Jewish legalism, Jerusalem, out of the picture (See comments in introduction to Galatians). ***Lord, why have You brought harm to this people:*** At this time Moses did not know the social struggle the Hebrews would have to go through in order that they be delivered from bondage. God could not explain to him what he would have to learn for himself. He would have to live through the social chaos of a cultural paradigm shift in order to understand the struggles that come with the shift.

Israel's Deliverance From Bondage (6:1 – 18:28)

Outline: (1) God appears to Moses (6:1 – 7:7), (2) Plagues of Egypt (7:8 – 11:9), (3) Deliverance from bondage (12:1 – 18:27)

Chapter 6 GOD APPEARS TO MOSES 6:1-12 *Let them go ... drive them*

out: The manifestation of the power of God would be so great through the plagues, that not only would Pharaoh let the Hebrews go, he would actually drive them out of the land of Egypt. **God Almighty:** The fact that He is the only God is evidence that He is omnipotent (almighty) (See Gn 4:26; 12:8; 17:1; 28:3). God is the only eternal and absolute power. **Covenant:** Since God knows that He can keep the conditions for the establishment of His covenants with man, He can bind Himself to a covenant. **Land of their pilgrimage:** The forefathers had been aliens in the land that Israel was to be given as a possession (Gn 15:18). God had not forgotten the promise of the covenant. He was waiting until Israel was prepared to enter the land, and for the wickedness of the inhabitants to digress to the point of no moral return. **I will redeem you:** One of our definitions for the metaphor “redemption,” as it is used in reference to our salvation in Christ, is here defined. As Israel could not deliver herself from the bondage of Egyptian captivity, so no man can deliver himself from his own sin. It was by the grace of God that God chose Israel for nation building. It is by the grace of God that we are redeemed from sin through the blood of Jesus. **Unskilled in speech:** Literally, “uncircumcised lips.” This was a Hebrew idiom referring to imperfection with reference to communication. An uncircumcised ear was one that would not hear (Jr 6:10). Uncircumcised lips referred to one who could not properly communicate. It is apparent that Moses lacked some skill in speaking. It is thus

interesting that God would use such a person to accomplish the great feat of leading a nation out of bondage. It is true that in our weaknesses God’s work can be witnessed. God uses those who feel weak and inadequate to accomplish His work in order that He be glorified.

6:13-27 God wanted Israel to know that in this historical deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, it was Moses and Aaron who were God’s designated leaders. Their names are thus mentioned in this official genealogy. The genealogical list begins with Reuben and Simeon, the two older brothers of Levi. As the descendants of Levi, God chose Moses and Aaron from what would eventually be the priestly tribe of Levi to lead the people of Israel from bondage.

The emphasis here is on the tribe of Levi, from which Moses and Aaron came. There is thus more detail given concerning the descendants of Levi than in any previous genealogy (See Gn 46:9-11; Nm 3:18-33). By giving the ages of Levi, Kohath and Amram, God wanted Israel to know throughout history that by the time of the deliverance, there was no question in the oral lineage of Levi that Moses and Aaron were descendants of Levi. **Amram:** The Amram of verse 18 is not the same Amram of verse 20 because there are several generations between the two. **Korah:** Though Korah, Moses’ cousin, later perished because of rebellion, his mention here is to affirm to his descendants their genealogical heritage (Nm 16:1; 26:11). **Jochebed:** She was the mother of Moses and the aunt of Amram. **Eleazer:** This was Aaron’s son

whose grandson was Phinehas. **Elisheba:** This is the name of Aaron's wife which is in Greek, Elizabeth. **Their armies:** Reference is to the orderly arrangement by which Israel was marched out of Egypt, not to armed men for battle. **These are the ones:** God inspired this statement to be made in order to reaffirm to Israel for all history those to whom He spoke and by whom He worked to bring Israel out of bondage.

6:28-30 Unskilled in speech: At this time God again commissioned Moses to go before Pharaoh. But Moses again questioned his ability to speak. So on this encounter with Pharaoh, Aaron was used to fulfill his destiny from God to be the spokesman for Moses. From this point on, the two leaders work as one, though Moses is the one Pharaoh would perceive to be a "god" before Pharaoh.

Chapter 7

7:1-7 A god to Pharaoh: It would be Pharaoh who would perceive Moses to be such because Pharaoh considered himself a god to the Egyptian people. He would conclude that Moses was a god because of the miraculous power that would be unleashed on Egypt through the command of Moses. Though Pharaoh would reject the commands of Moses that came from God, he could not reject the work of God through the miraculous plagues. It is for this reason we must understand that the confrontation that was about to begin between God and Pharaoh was a confrontation between the one true and living God and the gods of Egypt that had been created after the

imagination of the Egyptians. The miracles that God would work through Moses were for the purpose of proving to the Egyptians that there was no other God than the one the Hebrews worshiped. We must not misunderstand this point simply because it has been the work of God throughout history to disprove the false imaginations of men who seek to create their own gods and establish their own religious behavior. Religions that progress to the point of instituting the head of the religion to be the political or government head of state, have put the people of the nation in bondage. The Israelites were under political bondage, however, the Egyptians were under the bondage of their own ignorance. By the end of the confrontation between God and Pharaoh, both the Egyptian people and Pharaoh would understand that there is only one God. We thank the Holy Spirit for inspiring a record of this historical event in order that we have an inspired document of the behavior of people and princes that are deceived by their own imaginations. **I will harden Pharaoh's heart:** The miraculous work of God through Moses would be the occasion for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. We must not understand this to mean that God worked directly on the heart of Pharaoh to harden his heart. Because of his pride and arrogance, Pharaoh had a heart that was disposed unto hardening itself against the will of God, that Israel be freed. Therefore, when the occasion presented itself for hardening – the deliverance of Israel by God – Pharaoh hardened his own heart against the will of

God. For this reason, God here assumes the responsibility for the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh because He demanded of Pharaoh that he let His people go (See comments Rm 9:14-24). ***The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord:*** We must not forget this statement as we study through the following events. During the performance of great magical tricks that were claimed to be miraculous, the Egyptians would judge that God's miraculous work through the plagues was real supernatural work. They understood that their magicians worked only tricks that counterfeited the supernatural. We must not assume that the magicians who stood against Moses and Aaron worked any supernatural events. Only through their skillful trickery were they able to presume to be in control of the supernatural. It is here that the Egyptians would be our witness, that this confrontation between Moses and the magicians was not a contest between the supernatural powers of God and some supposed supernatural power of Satan. The contest was between the deceptive power of Satan against the mighty supernatural power of God. After the contest, the Egyptians clearly saw this, and thus, we must also clearly understand this from this record of the events. Though we do not have all the details of the events themselves, we must conclude that Satan worked no miraculous power throughout these events. The witness of the Egyptian populace is a testimony to this conclusion.

PLAGUES OF EGYPT

7:8-13 *Show a miracle:* When this would be asked, it would be asked from those who had experienced no true miraculous work of God. Pharaoh would be asking only for the amusing tricks of his sorcerers. His surprise would be in the fact that the supernatural work of God would be unleashed on the nation of Egypt. The purpose of the miracles of God would be to prove that Moses and Aaron were messengers from God. If the magicians of Egypt actually worked miracles, then there would be no proof in the confirming miracles that Moses and Aaron were God's true messengers. It is for this reason that God does not allow Satan to work miracles through any of his messengers. ***Their secret arts:*** The fact that the Holy Spirit used this terminology identifies that what the sorcerers did was actually the skillful art of human manipulation in performing that which was perceived to be miraculous. These skills are called "arts," or enchantments, because they were the work of men, not the work of any supernatural power. They were "secret" because these magicians would not reveal their abilities, since the revelation of such would displace them from their positions in society. Therefore, though we are not given all the details of what happened, we must not assume that they actually unleashed some supernatural power of the underworld. The magicians were simply skillful men in their secret art of witchcraft. ***Aaron's staff swallowed up***

their staffs: The onlooking sorcerers walked away from the event without their staffs, thus affirming that a true supernatural work had taken place by the hand of Aaron. The text says that the sorcerers' staffs "became serpents." But the text also states that Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs, not serpents. We would understand that the sorcerers' staffs had only become what appeared to be serpents by those who were standing by. It could have been that God allowed the sorcerers' staffs to become true serpents in order to present the occasion for further hardening of the hearts of the Egyptians. If this were the case, then the swallowing up of the staffs of the sorcerers would result in God's messengers prevailing over all that would be presented by the sorcerers of Egypt. Keep in mind that the text actually states that it was the staffs that were swallowed up, not real serpents. In cases as this we must always keep in mind that not all that happened in the event was recorded in the Bible.

7:14-25 The plague of blood: This is the first plague that was issued against Pharaoh and all Egypt because of Pharaoh's resistance to the will of God to let Israel go free. **To the water:** It could be that in the mornings Pharaoh went to the bank of the river for worship. Since the Nile River was an object of worship, this plague was God's first strike against the idolatry of Egypt in order to manifest His power over the gods that the Egyptians had created after their own imagination. **Lord God of the Hebrews:** The Lord wanted Pharaoh not to misun-

derstand the One from whom the command came to turn the water into blood. **Nile:** The existence of the nation of Egypt depended on this river. It seasonally flooded its banks, watering the rich farming land of Egypt. God's strike against this river was a strike against the very livelihood of Egypt. The plague was so intense that all the fish died and the Egyptians had to dig for water in shallow wells. **Magicians ... did so with their enchantments:** We are not told where the magicians obtained water for this magical trick since all the waters of the Nile had been turned to blood. But the fact that the inspired Scripture refers to them as magicians is evidence that they worked only a trick in order to turn water to blood. And since they could have had only a small amount of water, we would conclude that the trickery would have been easy to do in the eyes of the people. **His heart was not moved:** It seems incredible that this miracle did not weaken the resistance of Pharaoh. God knew that this Pharaoh of Egypt would have a hardened heart, and thus used the occasion of Pharaoh's hardened heart to inflict the plagues upon Egypt. The work of God through the plagues would thus be a testimony to Israel that God was real and that He had the power to work such wonders with His creation. He revealed that He had power over His creation, and thus power that could not be copied by anything that man could do.

Chapter 8

8:1-15 The plague of the frogs: Let My people go: The command from God

was issued again to Pharaoh in order that he know for sure that God wanted him to understand that freedom for Israel must be clearly understood. ***If you refuse ... I will smite:*** A fair warning is given. If refused, then another miraculous outpouring of God would come forth on the land of Egypt. ***Frogs:*** By striking the Nile, the course of life in Egypt was attacked. By bringing even into the bedrooms of the houses of the people the masses of loathsome frogs, the living conditions of the Egyptians were attacked. The dilemma for the Egyptians was that the frogs were objects of worship, and since these creatures invaded their houses, they could not carry on with their daily living without crushing many frogs. ***Magicians:*** We wonder why these sorcerers produced more frogs, when a real miracle would have involved taking away the frogs. ***Take away the frogs:*** For the first time Pharaoh is weakened. He lied to Moses and Aaron in order to secure relief from the devastating effect of the frogs on the people. He never intended to let the people go. ***Tomorrow:*** Not only was it a miracle that the frogs appeared, but now it would be another miracle that they would, except for the river, die in one day. ***Hardened his heart:*** When the pressure was on, Pharaoh was weakened. But now that the frogs were gone, he went back on his word and refused to allow Israel to leave.

8:16-19 The plague of the lice: This plague is unleashed without any formal presentation before Pharaoh. ***Dust ... lice:*** As man was created from the dust of the earth, so were these lice. Some

have suggested that the lice were gnats or mosquitoes. The agony of the plague was in the fact that there was no escape from these insects. The purpose of the plagues was to make life miserable for the Egyptian people. Since Egypt was not a democracy, the people could not remove Pharaoh. However, since the people considered Pharaoh a god of the land, the people would wonder why their god could not bring them relief from the plagues. ***The magicians tried:*** Unlike the other pronouncements of the plagues, there was no formal presentation before Pharaoh, which presentation was carried out over a period of time. The magicians in the former plagues, therefore, could prepare their own tricks in order to counterfeit the plagues. But in this case, they could not do so. ***This is the finger of God:*** The magicians had to confess that they had come to the limits of their ability to copy a truly miraculous event. This may have been an excuse for their inability to copy the deed, or an admission that they had no time to prepare for a counterfeit work.

8:20-32 The plague of the flies: The location of this presentation before Pharaoh is also at the river where Pharaoh went for early worship (vs 20). ***Flies:*** It is difficult from the Hebrew word to determine the exact insect that is meant. Some translations have translated the Hebrew word to mean gnats, beetles or gadflies. ***The land was wasted:*** Regardless of the correct translation of the Hebrew word, the effect of the insects on the land was devastating. ***Land of Goshen:*** Though the other plagues

reached into the land of the Israelites, this plague was an indication that God had separated His people from the affliction of the plagues. The Egyptians could not misunderstand the point God was making. The point was that Israel was God's people, and He wanted Pharaoh to let them go. **Go ... sacrifice:** Possibly Pharaoh knew that the Egyptian people would stone the Israelites if they sacrificed the animals that were sacred. For this reason, Moses offered no compromise with the evil intent of Pharaoh, and thus demanded the three days' journey away from the Egyptians in order to offer the sacrifices.

Chapter 9

9:1-7 The plague of death among livestock: Severe pestilence: It is not known what this disease was. The effect of it was the death of the livestock of the Egyptians. The livestock of the Hebrews was spared. Since the livestock of the Hebrews was spared, God again signaled to Pharaoh His protection of His people. **All the livestock:** The word "all" often means in Hebrew a great number, but not totality. In the seventh plague (20,21), the livestock was further afflicted.

9:8-12 The plague of boils: As with the third plague, Pharaoh received no warning concerning this plague. As the dust of the ashes spread through Egypt, it caused boils. **Magicians:** These imposters are mentioned in the context of this plague, but only for the purpose of informing us that their magic could not guard Egypt against the power of God to inflict mankind with the plague. **The**

Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh: This is the first time it is stated specifically that the Lord assumed responsibility for hardening the heart of Pharaoh, which hardening was mentioned in 7:3. The Lord takes credit for hardening the heart of Pharaoh because He presented the opportunity for the arrogant predisposition of Pharaoh to resist the will of God to let His people go.

9:13-35 The plague of hail and fire: It seems that Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh at any time they chose. It is this plague that intensifies the hardships of those who were afflicted. The affliction would come within the household of Pharaoh in order that he understand that there was no god that man could conceive as the God of heaven. **Grievous hail ... fire:** The intensity of this plague was introduced with severe judgment language in reference to its effect on both people and livestock. This was the first plague that took human life. It was more destructive to human property and was made known with the terrifying manifestation of hail mingled with fire. **I have raised you up:** God brought Pharaoh into the position he had at the time of the Exodus. He foreknew that Pharaoh would resist His plan to deliver Israel from captivity. He knew that all ten plagues would have to be unleashed on Egypt in order that He be glorified as the all-powerful God of heaven. **Declared throughout all the earth:** God could have wiped Egypt off the map, and then taken the Hebrews into freedom. He did not do this in order to manifest to the world His control of all that is in the

world. We read the narrative of these events as a result of Pharaoh's hardened heart, and thus God has accomplished His purpose through Pharaoh. **He who feared the word of the Lord:** It certainly took some time to get the message of the curse of this plague announced throughout Egypt. It was thus a message of urgency for the sparing of life. Those Egyptians who by this time were convinced that God was working, gave heed to the message. Since the judgment would be upon all life in the country, the message had to be delivered to everyone in order to give people the opportunity to protect themselves from the impending danger of the hail. **Broke every tree:** The size of the hailstones was large enough to break down trees and kill large animals. But in the safety of Goshen, Israel was once again spared the devastating effect of the plague. **I have sinned:** Pharaoh was certainly terrified by the results of this plague. But Moses was surely suspicious of this confession since evil men will often confess and repent in times of trial, but forget their confessions and repentance when things return to normal. Confession and repentance are not necessarily signs of a changed life. When fruits of repentance come forth, then there is evidence of a changed life.

Chapter 10

10:1-20 The plague of the locust:

In the introduction to this plague God gave two reasons why He had chosen one as the hardened Pharaoh. (1) He chose Pharaoh in order that He might show the signs of the plagues to him. If Pharaoh

had given in at the beginning of the plagues, then we would not have this record of the great miraculous work of God through all the plagues. (2) God wanted Israel and all mankind to have a record of this great work of God. The fact that Pharaoh hardened his heart made it possible for God to work, and for us to have this revelation of the great work of God. **Locusts:** This would be a plague of what is commonly referred to as grasshoppers. They would spread across the earth and eat all that was left from the other plagues. **Pharaoh's servants:** It is apparent that Pharaoh had become what dictators commonly become in reference to their people. They live in the cocoon of their palaces and are not informed concerning the real condition of the countries over which they rule. It is the servants, therefore, who knew the devastated situation of Egypt. They are the ones who pled with Pharaoh. **Go serve the Lord:** It is at this time that Pharaoh finally relents to the initial request of Moses and Aaron, that the Israelites journey three days into the desert in order to sacrifice to the Lord. However, Pharaoh wanted Moses to leave the families and flocks in Egypt, a supposed guarantee that the men would return. But no compromises to the initial request would be made. **East wind:** Plagues of locusts are not uncommon in the world. But the miracle of the plague here was that it happened at the very time Moses said it would happen. The second miracle of the plague was that the locusts did not go into the land of Goshen. Since the locusts destroyed everything, this put the Egyptians at the

mercy of the Hebrews in the land of Goshen. The food source of the Egyptians had been destroyed, and thus they had to buy food from the Hebrews. In this way the Hebrews plundered the Egyptians as God has previously stated. **Face of the whole land:** Some translations read “whole earth.” But the meaning is that they covered the whole ground of the Egyptians, for they did not go into the land of Goshen.

10:21-29 The plague of darkness: **Darkness that may be felt:** The Creator of light shut off light. It is not difficult to understand that the Creator who brought light into existence is here dispelling the rays of light that came from the sun, moon and stars. The lack of light was so great, that they could not see one another, and thus for three days there was no movement of humanity. **Only let your flocks and your herds be detained:** And such is the nature of the one who is bowed to his knees with a hardened heart. He grudgingly submits, but only with compromises in reference to what must be obeyed. But in reference to obedience to God, there can be no compromise in our obedience to the will of God. God seeks total commitment to His will. **Never see your face again:** This was the last time Moses would ever meet with Pharaoh. From this time on, Pharaoh, after the next plague, would thrust the Hebrews from his presence, only to have his army parish in the waters of the Red Sea.

Chapter 11

11:1-3 Verses 1-3 are parenthetical

with specific instructions to the Hebrews concerning things that they must do in preparation for their flight from Egypt (See 3:21,22). **Borrow from his neighbor:** This would complete the plunder of Egypt. As a conquering army despoiled those who were conquered, so Israel prevailed over Egypt, and thus plundered them as the Egyptian people willingly gave what was requested. It could be assumed that the Egyptian people, unlike Pharaoh, had finally relinquished to the demands of Moses. They willingly gave of their possession in order to expedite the flight of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt. Since the plagues had taken place over several weeks of time, if not months, the spirit of the Egyptian people was broken. They saw that their only relief from the severity of the plagues was to rid the land of every Hebrew. Since the Hebrews would not need the precious metals that they took from the Egyptians for their own personal use, then there was some other reason for God exhorting them to plunder Egypt. We do not discover this reason until Israel arrives at the foot of Mt. Sinai where God instructs Moses to construct the tabernacle. The precious metals that were taken from Egypt were used in the construction of the tabernacle.

11:4-10 The plague of the death among the firstborn: The statements that are made here come from God and are directed to Moses, for the conversation with Pharaoh concluded in 10:29. God now acts without appeals to Pharaoh, or conversations with Moses. **First-born:** Reference here is to the male chil-

dren, the pride of the Egyptians. In the culture of the Egyptians, the firstborn son was the hereditary center of reference to the financial and social prestige of the family. All other children of the family looked to the firstborn as the future leadership of the family. God's striking down of this member of the family, therefore, would and did bring Egypt to its knees. **Pharaoh will not hearken to you:** It is the nature of dictators, especially those who feel that they are gods over the destiny of their people, to defy any outside force that would endanger their position. Dictators have no feelings for their people. They will sacrifice the well-being of the people for the sake of their position. They do this because they are out of touch with the people. Their infatuation with themselves and who they are is greater than their care for the people.

Chapter 12

DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

The significance of what is explained and what happens with reference to the Passover cannot be overemphasized. Eternal metaphor is here being established for the Passover sacrifice of the Son of God in the centuries to come after this historical event. The Passover event would be for the safety of the firstborn of the Hebrew children. The firstborn of the Egyptians would be sacrificed for the deliverance of the Hebrews. The consequence of the event would be the freedom of Israel from bondage. These historical events would set the earthly and

literal substance of the sacrifice which the firstborn of God would make for the deliverance of man from sin at the time of the cross.

12:1-13 *First month of the year:*

This would be the new beginning of the religious month for the Israelites. It would be the month Abib (13:4). After the deliverance, the month became known as Nisan. **A lamb:** A lamb for each paternal family was to be offered.

Him and his neighbor next to his house:

If the lamb was more than sufficient for his family, he was to invite his next door neighbors into his house for the eating of the lamb. These instructions set the stage for the household eating of the Passover that would last throughout the history of Israel. The Passover would be a communal feast. **Without blemish:** The lamb was to be chosen four days before the event, thus securing its protection that it be without blemish. The fact that it was to be no more than a year old implied its innocence. **Upper door posts:**

The sacrificial lamb was to be killed between sunset and dark, with the blood being placed on the lintel of the doors of the houses in which it was eaten. **Eat the meat in that night:** Once roasted, the meat was to be eaten in the night the lamb was killed. **Unleavened bread:**

This was bread dough that was unmixed with leaven. It was bread that was made without fermented dough. **Burn with fire:** There were to be no leftovers. The morning after the eating of the lamb, the remainder was to be burned. **Loins girded:**

While they were eating, their long robes had to be tied up to their loins

in order to be prepared for flight. Their shoes had to be on when eating in order to signify haste. **Judgment against all the gods of Egypt:** Societies that give up a knowledge of God will create for themselves their own religious behavior and gods to appease this behavior. Systems of religion throughout the world may not be as complex as that developed in Egypt where there was a god for every aspect of man, Pharaoh himself also claiming to be a god. But systems of religious thinking develop in the same manner in every culture as it developed in Egypt. It was a pharaohian religion with a political/religious leader at the top, with subservient leaders to maintain the system (the magicians), and the adherents who allowed the system to continue (the Egyptian people). In this system, dictatorial leaders take advantage of the religious nature of man, and thus use religion to maintain their control over the people. In many cultures this control is maintained through accepted religious leaders who in some way are supposed to have control over the spirits of the underworld. But in every case, such religions are only the invention of the imagination of men who have forsaken a knowledge of the true and living God. It is against these imaginations that God sets Himself to destroy. In the plagues of Egypt, we have thus an inspired conquest of God over the religious imaginations of men. It is in the context of this confrontation that we now understand the nature of God's judgment on Egypt and all who would seek to create religion after their own imagination. The "gods of

Egypt" were not real, but only gods the Egyptians had created after the imagination of their own minds. God's confrontation with these preconceived gods, therefore, was a confrontation with the erroneous thinking of Egyptian religion. It was His confrontation with the thinking of men who created religion and gods after their own desires. In the religious/social context of Egypt, God wanted to bring down the religious arrogance of the Egyptians. By doing such, He proved that He is the only one true and living God. **I will pass over you:** From this action the definition of the word "Passover" is established. The sign of the blood on the lintel of the doors was the signal that God would pass over the house of those who had obeyed the command to sacrifice the lamb.

12:14-19 This day: This was the fourteenth of Abib, the new beginning of the religious year of Israel. **An ordinance forever:** Some translations say a "perpetual ordinance." Here we now have a definition of the word "forever" as it is used in many contexts of Scripture. The ordinance was to be observed throughout the generations of Israel. These generations ended in Christ, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:28). Therefore, the ordinance of the Passover was to last "forever" until the generations of Israel ended, which they did in Christ. The use of the word "forever" is in the context that the ordinance not go away until God intended that it go away. The emphasis is on the surety of the existence of the ordinance, not on its supposed unending existence. **Unleavened bread:**

The Passover was followed immediately by the feast of unleavened bread. The feast of the unleavened bread started the day after the eating of the Passover meal. **Holy assembly:** Since the Passover was established for an immediate family to eat, with friends close by to consume the Passover lamb, this was a home assembly, not a gathering of a great number of people. These two days, the Passover day and the seventh day, were holy in the sense that they were separated from the rest of the days on which the Israelites could work. **Brought your armies:** These days were to be days during which they must remember how God brought the host (armies) of the clans or families of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. **Cut off from the assembly:** The leaven was even to be put out of the houses on these days. Those who failed to partake of these feasts would give up their right to be a part of the nation of Israel. All Israelites, and all foreigners who joined themselves to Israel, were to observe these feasts. **Leaven:** The fermentation of the leaven was a symbol of evil and wickedness. At this time in the history of Israel it was the influence of Egyptian idolatry. This influence was to be separated from the thinking of the Hebrews in order that they be sanctified. Today, the church is to do the same. *“Therefore, purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For indeed, Christ our Passover was sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and*

truth” (1 Co 5:7,8).

12:20-28 In preparation for the coming of the destroyer, the blood was to be splashed on the lintel and the two doorposts. The occupants were then to stay in the house until the morning. The presence of the blood signalled the destroyer to pass over the house (Compare 1 Pt 1:18,19).

12:29,30 *All the firstborn:* Except for those who had the blood of the lamb on the lintels and doorposts of their houses, every firstborn of both man and animal died at midnight. The judgment was without prejudice, and thus indicates that God will bring His judgments upon all who will disobey His will.

12:31-36 At this time, Pharaoh, before whom Moses said he would not speak again in 10:29, sent an urgent messenger to Moses. **Be gone:** Pharaoh had at this time understood the point and request of God. His statement is a command that the Israelites leave the country. **Bless me also:** Pharaoh wanted to escape any other judgment that might come. In his humiliation before the Egyptian people, he at this time seems broken in spirit. **The Egyptians urged the people:** All the Egyptians now want the Israelites gone lest they suffer more. Their fear was that the entire population might suffer death if the Israelites remained in the land. So with haste the Hebrews took up those belongings they could carry and headed for freedom. They impoverished the Egyptians by asking for their gold, silver and clothes. **Asked:** Some translations have used the word “borrowed” to translate the Hebrew

word *sha'el*. But the better definition of the word is either “asked” or “demanded.” All that they took of the Egyptians would be used later in the construction of the tabernacle.

12:37-39 Succoth: The location of this city is unknown. It was probably a short distance from Rameses toward the Red Sea. **600,000:** Since this number included only those men who were of the age to go to war, with the wives and children, the total number of those who went in the exodus was probably somewhere around three million people. **Mixed multitude:** When some Egyptians realized that there was only one God of all, this statement possibly included some of these believing Egyptians who joined the exodus. This number could have also included other foreign slaves who decided to join the exodus to freedom. Unfortunately, some of these people eventually became a snare to the Israelites (Nm 11:4). **Flocks ... herds ... cattle:** Though the Israelites certainly possessed some livestock for their own survival in bondage, the Egyptians may have also given them livestock for their journey. **Unleavened cakes:** The fact that they had no time to prepare food for travel indicates that their departure would be with great haste after Pharaoh gave the order that they “be gone.”

12:40-42 Four hundred and thirty: It is not stated in this context if this number included any time for the dwelling of the fathers in the land of Canaan previous to the dwelling in Egypt. In Galatians 3:17, Paul stated that the law was given 430 years after Abraham. But in

Acts 7:6 it is recorded that Stephen stated Israel was in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. The number of 400 years agrees with Genesis 15:13 where it is stated that Israel would spend this many years in affliction. **Solemn observance:** It was a night that would never be forgotten throughout the lifetime of those who left Egypt. It was independence day, and throughout the generations of Israel this event was to be commemorated as a day of solemn remembrance.

12:43-51 These laws are added instructions concerning the observance of the Passover. The observance centered around fellowship and celebration. It was a meal of unity among all Israelites and a celebration of their deliverance from bondage. **No foreigner:** The Passover was for the circumcised Israelites. **Bondservant:** Only when a slave had been circumcised could he eat the Passover. **In one house:** The lamb was to be eaten in one house and not distributed among houses. **Bone:** They were to break no bones of the lamb. **All the assembly:** Though it was a house assembly for the actual eating, it was to be eaten throughout cities and regions in the homes of various people. Since neighbors could be invited into the one house, everyone was to meet in house assemblies in order to eat the Passover lamb. **Alien sojourns:** Even if one were passing through the land, all the males had to be circumcised before they could eat the Passover with the Israelites. **Homeborn and .. alien:** The same law concerning the Passover is to be applied to everyone who would eat of the lamb.

Chapter 13

13:1-2 *The firstborn ... is Mine:* In His plague against the firstborn of the Egyptians, God now claimed the firstborn for Himself. With the blessing of sparing the firstborn of Israel came also the responsibility of dedicating the firstborn of Israel to the Lord. The firstborn children of Israel were to be set aside for God's special ownership. Since the Hebrew word here for firstborn is masculine in gender, then reference would be to the firstborn males.

13:3-10 *Remember this day:* This was Israel's independence day (See 12:14-20). ***Sign ... memorial:*** It was a sign that they remember the supernatural power by which God delivered them from captivity. It was by no invention of themselves or strength of their armies. Their deliverance was solely by the grace and power of God. They were to remember this event every year. The metaphorical meaning is certainly pointing Israel to the time when God would again redeem them, but the redemption would be from the bondage of sin, from which no man can deliver himself.

13:11-16 Not only were the firstborn males of the people to be given to the Lord, but also the firstborn of the animals. They were to be given in sacrifice to the Lord. ***I redeem:*** From this use of the word "redeem" we would understand that God takes the firstborn unto Himself from the rest of the children. ***Phylacteries:*** A phylactery was a small box that was worn between the eyes on the forehead. In it were the scriptures of this text (vss 1-16). These scriptures were to

be remembered concerning Israel's deliverance. Other scriptures were also written and placed in the phylacteries (See Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21).

13:17-22 *Around the way of the wilderness:* If Israel had headed directly to Palestine, it would have taken them about two weeks to cover the distance. However, they were slaves right out of bondage, and thus untrained as warriors for immediate battle to take the land from the Canaanites. If they had gone directly to Palestine, they would surely have encountered the warlike Philistines, and subsequently suffered great loss of life, or would have returned to Egypt. For this reason, God took them south to Mt. Sinai, and then into forty years of wandering in the desert because of their lack of faith. Israel had to go to Sinai to receive the law, for without law there can be no true freedom. ***Armed for battle:*** Though the word "armed" (literally mean "harnessed") is often used in reference to military action, in this context it refers to the organization of the approximate three million people who made their way out of Egypt. ***Joseph:*** See Gn 50:25. Since Joseph had been entombed after the manner of Egyptian mummies for four hundred years before this event, his body was taken for burial in Canaan (Ja 24:32). ***Etham:*** The exact location of this area is unknown, and thus the exact location of the crossing of the Red Sea is unknown. However, many Bible scholars presume that the crossing took place somewhere in the southern part of the Red Sea. ***Pillar of the cloud .. fire:*** These two leading phenomena stayed

with Israel for many years as they wandered to Mt. Sinai and throughout the wilderness. They were led away from areas of great danger, but to the areas where God wanted them to go. The cloud and fire were constant reminders that God was with them.

Chapter 14

14:1-4 God's direction for Israel's journey here is to present an opportunity for the destruction of Pharaoh's army. For this reason He asked them to turn back to the north and move to the shore of the Red Sea. In this position Pharaoh would perceive that they were cornered, and thus would feel confident to launch an attack against them. ***Entangled in the land:*** After Pharaoh had finished mourning the loss of the firstborn of Egypt, he possibly thought that the God of Israel had lost His children in the deserts of Egypt west of the Red Sea. He may have perceived their turning back and camping by the shore of the Red Sea because of confusion on the part of the Israelites.

14:5-9 *Hardened:* Bitterness had now set in. Pharaoh had lost something which he treasured for the greatness of Egypt. In his humiliation at the hand of those he considered his slaves, he made the decision to assemble as many chariots as possible in order to bring down retribution on the Hebrew slaves. It is still apparent at this point that he did not realize that he was planning an attack against the God of heaven.

14:10-14 *They said to Moses:* When the times are tough, the true character of an individual is manifested. Such is also

the case with a nation. In their weak faith, this nation complained to its leader for delivering them to a point of what seemed to be certain death. The nation did not understand at this time that God had led them to an opportunity where they had to trust totally in Him. In order to strengthen our faith, God leads us to the point where we have to trust in Him. Though the Israelites had some faith, the faith they needed to build a nation in freedom had to be strengthened before they reached Mt. Sinai where the law would be given. We thus see the trap in which they found themselves at this time as a faith building opportunity for the nation.

14:15-18 *Go forward:* It was not a time to look back. It was not a time for crying out in complaint to God. It was a time for action. The dividing of the water not only meant that Israel was given salvation from death, its closing meant that the oppressors of Egypt would be removed as a threat forever. In the magnitude of the event, God would receive the glory.

14:19,20 *Angel of God:* The "angel of the Lord" (See 3:2) that was giving them direction by going before them, was now giving them protection by standing behind them. The cloud brought darkness to the Egyptians, but light to the Hebrews.

14:21-25 *The waters were divided:* Since the Israelites were on the west side of the Red Sea, the strong east wind that dried up the bottom of the parted sea would be blowing in their faces as they walked across on dry ground. ***Wall:*** The waters were a wall on each side of the

Israelites as they walked through on dry land. We do not know how wide the way was made, nor how high the wall of water was. But we do know that enough space was made for approximately three million people to pass through in a single night. ***The Egyptians pursued:*** We would assume that the Egyptians were so obsessed with destroying the freed slaves that they rushed into the opening of water without thinking. It could also have been that Pharaoh issued a life-threatening command and his men obeyed. ***He troubled the army of the Egyptians:*** Certainly the nature of the environment in which they had led themselves would be enough to stir great apprehension in their hearts. In order to slow down their pursuit of the Israelites, in the midst of the Sea God caused the chariot wheels to fall off. The Egyptians were thus bogged down. They were too far into the Sea to return to dry land when God released the wall of water upon them.

14:26-31 The water that saved the Israelites, was the same water that destroyed their enemies. ***Egyptians dead on the sea shore:*** It takes several days for a drowned body to surface. Add some time for the bodies to wash ashore, and we understand that in their exhaustion the Israelites remained at the scene on the east shore for several days while they enjoyed God's victory. It would have been a surreal experience that needed time to comprehend fully. ***Fearred ... believed:*** The awesome event that caused fear, also produced belief. They had witnessed the judgment of God on the ungodly, but ex-

perienced the salvation of the Lord as they watched the dead bodies of the Egyptians wash ashore.

Chapter 15

When one experiences the great salvation of God, he is moved to sing praise to God, which thing the saved will always do when they are delivered from their oppressors (See Rv 15:3). It is only natural for people to sing when they feel a spirit of thanksgiving for all that God has done to deliver them from sin.

15:1-12 God is the savior of His people. He threw the horse and Egyptian rider into the sea. He delivered His people in order that they sing praise to Him. ***The Lord is a warrior:*** This anthropomorphism describes the Lord in human terms as one who goes to war for the salvation of the people. ***Your right hand:*** This is again another anthropomorphism, the description of God by use of human terms. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus does not have a body form as a man, the figurative meaning is that by the power of the right arm He was able to deliver. Though the enemies of God and His people are defiant, as expressed in verse 9, God can overcome anything that man may pose as a threat against His people. At this time in history, there was nothing that man could do to harm the nation of Israel. The only threat that would come to Israel would be a threat from within, which threat would happen later at the foot of Mt. Sinai when they would seek to return to Egypt. ***You among the gods:*** It is not that there are other gods. These were gods that were

created after the image of men who gave up a knowledge of the one true and living God. The point is that there is no imagination of man that is greater than the God of heaven, for men cannot conceive of that which is beyond their experience. In these events, therefore, the imagination of the Israelites was stretched to the limit as they physically experienced only a small indication of the God who created all things.

15:13-19 *People you have redeemed:* The literal meaning of what would be the metaphor of the Christian's salvation is here defined. As God physically redeemed His people from a bondage from which they could not deliver themselves, so through the blood of Jesus Christians have been redeemed from sin. ***Your holy habitation:*** This statement in verse 13 is a reference to the habitation of God. Because He is spirit, He resides in a heavenly environment. Contrary to what some have asserted, this is not a reference to Jerusalem and the temple, which did not exist at the time this was written. ***People will hear and be afraid:*** The news of this deliverance would spread for years throughout the land of Palestine which Israel would take over forty years from this time. ***Reign forever and ever:*** Certainly the reign of God is without end, but the meaning here is not on time but certainty. The context defines the meaning. As God certainly overthrew the Egyptians, He would certainly overthrow all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan at the time when He would bring Israel into the borders of the promised land.

15:20,21 *Miriam the prophetess:* As Aaron her brother, Miriam led as a prophetess among the Israelites. Aaron was established as the spiritual leader and Miriam as the prophetess, but it was their brother Moses who was the commander in chief. ***Timbrels ... dances:*** In their joy for their deliverance, these women broke forth with tambourines and dances for their deliverance from the Egyptians and for their new freedom from the taskmasters of their former existence.

15:22-27 *Wilderness of Shur:* The Israelites were three days into the waterless wilderness where there are no trees and vegetation. They could not drink of the bitter waters of Marah (that is, "bitter"). ***Murmured:*** They had just experienced the parting of the Red Sea, but the lack of water tested their faith. As usual, people of little faith always complain to their leaders instead of turning to God for deliverance. Their sin was in complaining to God through Moses. But their complaining was not only a lack of faith on this occasion, it was a culture of complaint that they had developed throughout their years of bondage in Egypt. While in bondage, they developed a culture of complaining against their taskmasters. This culture had to be broken before they could truly trust in God, as well as keep His commandments without grumbling. This would be a hard lesson for them to learn, but one they must. ***"Do all things without grumbling and disputing"*** (Ph 2:14; see Jd 16). One who continually grumbles has not yet learned the spirit of submission. ***Tree ... into the waters:*** The act of throwing the tree into

the waters to produce the miracle was to reaffirm the leadership of Moses, who was the channel through whom God worked. **Tested them:** This reveals why God allowed them to go the three days into the wilderness, and then run out of water. He wanted the Israelites to discover their own lack of faith. **Statute ... ordinance:** If they would continue to obey His voice, God promised that He would take care of them. Beginning with the crossing of the Red Sea, and continuing with the miracle at Marah, God was seeking to build the faith of the Israelites. Their complaining must be replaced with faith. **Twelve wells:** As they came to the waters of Elim, the Israelites surely remembered their complaints at Marah. If they would have only endured past Marah, they would have made it to Elim.

Chapter 16

16:1-3 On their way to Mt. Sinai, the Israelites left the wilderness of Shur and entered the wilderness of Sin. It is in the wilderness of Sin that they again sinned in complaining. Instead of going to God in prayer for provision, they complained to their leaders, Moses and Aaron. The euphoria of their freedom had now left them as they yearned to return to Egypt where they ate well in bondage. Their faith in God to provide for them was not yet strong enough to take them through tough times. Because of their reaction to the desperate situation in which they found themselves, we now understand why God led them into these circumstances. He needed to prove to the nation that He would take care of

them if they would only put their entire trust in Him.

16:4-12 We must conclude that God was allowing Israel to come to the point of deprivation in order that they trust in Him for guidance and sustenance. Throughout the beginning of the birth of this new nation, the people had to learn to trust in God. As with the beginning of every group of God's people, great faith was needed. As a nation, they were very insecure. They had no land, no gardens, and no wells for water. They walked in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. It was the perfect environment in which to develop faith. As with great men whom God would use to lead great movements, God first takes His people to the desert in order that their focus be placed entirely upon Him. In the future, they would look back and conclude that their existence as a nation was totally the work of God who formed them into a nation in the Sinai Peninsula. **See the glory of God:** When the food came, they would perceive the presence and work of God. Every true miracle manifested the glory of God, not the man through whom the miracle was worked. The true miracle was so profound that the beholder could not ignore the one through whom God worked the miracle. **Not against us, but against the Lord:** Anyone who would claim to be of the people of God must understand that any complaint they have in reference to their well-being is not against their leaders, but against God. In this context Moses chided the people for their misguided complaints. **Glory of the Lord appeared:** Aaron brought the people near

to the cloud, from which the Lord clearly manifested His presence. The clearly manifested presence of God is a manifestation of His glory. The giving of the manna and quail was a rebuke from God to Israel because the appearance of the manna and quail was a clear manifestation of God. **You will know:** The meat and bread was a clear evidence that God was with them, as well as His provision for their physical needs. In this early beginning of the nation of Israel, God was patient with their complaints while providing for them. But the time would come when their complaints would be rewarded with punishment (See Nm 14:11,12).

16:13-21 Quail: By this time in their journey, the quail provided the meat that the Israelites craved. The miracle was in the continual creation of the manna and quail in that the Lord provided the food throughout their journey for forty years in the wilderness. **Manna:** The word “manna” probably came from the question that was asked by the people when they saw it, “What is it?” We do not know what it was, but it was something as a fine flake-like substance that lay on the ground in the early morning (Compare Jn 6:32-40). As the quail, the miracle of the manna was that it was provided daily for Israel throughout their forty years in the wilderness.

16:22-31 There was a continual miracle for Israel in the manna. Not only would it appear six days out of the week, there would be enough on the sixth day to be gathered for the Sabbath. However, if they gathered for two days’ provision

on any other day than the sixth day, the manna bred worms and stank. What they needed for the Sabbath was to be baked or boiled and held over for the Sabbath. **Sabbath:** Before the giving of the Sabbath laws on Mt. Sinai, Israel as a nation was here being prepared to honor the Sabbath (See 20:8-11; Gn 2:2,3). It is apparent that though the Sabbath may have been kept by the patriarchs, it was not observed by Israel in captivity. In the events that took place in this context, God was preparing Israel for the giving of the Sabbath law at Mt. Sinai. **Every man in his place:** Throughout the history of Israel, even to the time of Jesus, this principle was kept by the Jews. The Sabbath was not a time for general assemblies of the people. Every family was to remain at home. By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had instituted a great number of laws in order that this principle be kept, one being the Sabbath-day journey (At 1:12).

16:32-36 The purpose for keeping an omer of the manna for generations to come was to prove that it actually existed. The miracle was so great concerning the provision of the manna and quail that later generations would surely consider such to be a fable of the fathers, and thus forget that God had actually provided for them in the wilderness. **Omer ... ephah:** These were measurements in Egypt, though the ephah continued to be used by the Israelites. One ephah was about a bushel in modern terms and an omar about one and a half quarts, or approximately a liter.

Chapter 17

17:1-7 *Rephidim*: It is believed that this may be the Wadi Refayid that is in a valley in the southern mountains of Sinai. The name means “rests” or “resting places.” ***Quarreled with Moses*:** It seems that their complaining had here become more intense since they were desperate for water. At this point, turning back to Egypt was no option. They needed water to live, and Moses was desperate to answer their complaint. ***Tempt the Lord*:** Though they desperately needed water, they had forgotten all the provision of the Lord in the past. It was at this point in their journey, therefore, that God’s patience with them turned from enduring their complaints to punishment for their lack of faith. Moses recognized this, and thus questioned why they would tempt the Lord who would bring punishment upon them. ***Smite the rock*:** With the elders as witnesses, God miraculously brought forth water in the midst of a desert. ***Massah*:** The word means “contention.” Here the Israelites contended with the Lord, wondering if He was with them. ***Meribah*:** This word means “proof,” that is God proved that He was with His people. The metaphor of this event is carried over to Christ offering the spiritual drink that men need today (See Jn 7:37; 1 Co 10:4; Gl 3:1).

17:8-13 *Amalek ... fought with Israel*: With his armies, Amalek attacked the feeble and weak who were in the rear of the Israelite company (See Dt 25:18). Though the Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Gn 36:12,16), they had forsaken their fear of the God of Israel, and thus

had felt no guilt about attacking the people of God. ***Joshua*:** First known as Oshea (Nm 13:16), this is the first mention of Joshua. His name means, “Jehovah is salvation”. ***Top of the hill*:** Hur, the grandfather of Bezaleel who was later inspired to build the tabernacle (31:2), went with Moses and Aaron to a hill that overlooked the valley where the battle between Israel and the Amalekites took place. ***Moses held up his hand*:** In this incident, God was reaffirming the position of Moses, as well as His protection of Israel through Moses. In order to prevent anarchy in the years to come, God wanted Moses to be considered the authority through whom He worked to bring Israel to the land of promise. With the presence of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to accomplish His part in the victory, illustrating that Moses also needed the help of others to stand by him. Good leaders know that they must always work in the company of others on whom they can lean.

17:14-16 *Write this*: This would be the beginning of the record of the history of Israel after their deliverance from bondage. ***Memorial*:** The events were to be recorded for future generations to remember. The memory of the event would certainly play a part in reminding the people what Amalek had done to the weak and feeble of Israel at a time when they were most vulnerable. In the future, the Amalekites would be completely annihilated from history for this attack against Israel (See 1 Sm 15; 1 Ch 4:41-43). ***“The Lord is my banner”*:** This is from the word “*Jehovah-nissi*.” The al-

tar would be a monument that the judgment of God was now upon the Amalekites, which judgment would eventually take place about one thousand years later during the days of Hezekiah. We must not be deceived when God takes time to carry out his judgments (See comments 2 Pt 3). Because He delays judgment does not mean that He will fail to bring judgment.

Chapter 18

18:1-5 Zipporah: Zipporah had returned to the house of Jethro when Moses had initially left for Egypt (4:18-26). **Two sons:** These sons, Gershom and Eliezer, had been born to Moses while he lived with Jethro during the forty years he was in Sinai before going to Egypt (2:22; 4:25). **The mountain of God:** This was the Mt. Sinai where God first appeared to Moses (See 3:1; 17:6; 19:1).

18:6-12 Bowed down: There was a good relationship between Moses and his father-in-law. Though Moses had just brought a great nation of people out of Egypt to the land of Jethro, he was humble enough to bow down and show respect to his father-in-law. **Goodness that the Lord had done to Israel:** All glory was given to God for all that had transpired during Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Moses took no glory for himself. **Jethro rejoiced:** Though the Midianites were later portrayed as the enemies of God (Nm 31), Jethro, a priest of Midian, stood as a beacon of righteousness in an evil nation. Righteous people are often found in the midst of wicked neighbors and nations

(See Gn 14:18-20; 20:6; Jb 1:1,8). We do not know how much Jethro understood about the one true God of heaven, but we do know that he gave glory to God for what He had done to deliver Israel. **Now I know:** The events that surrounded the deliverance of Israel evidently proved to Jethro that there was no other God than the one true and living God of Israel. **Greater than all gods:** Jethro saw in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt that the true God of heaven was greater than the imagined gods of men. **Sacrifices:** The sacrifice was in the giving of his own animals to be eaten in a celebration for what God had done with the nation of Israel. Burnt offerings were totally consumed for God. The other sacrifices, however, were consumed in a feast to the glory of God by those who were in fellowship with God and one another. In this way, Jethro manifested his unity with the nation of Israel.

18:13-23 Moses sat to judge: How judgment was to be given to the people was not something that was inspired by God, and thus Moses used his own judgment. His reason for judging as he did was that the people come to him to "inquire of God" and that he might teach them "the statutes of God and His laws." **You will surely wear away:** Jethro saw Moses' system of judging as very inefficient, and thus counseled Moses that he could not physically keep up with such a system. It would be difficult for him and for the people to function with the type of judging that he was doing. After reassuring Moses that God had chosen him to lead His people, he advised him to se-

lect men with three qualifications in order to do the day-to-day work of making judgments for the people. **Able men who fear God:** Those who would do the work Moses was doing must be godly men who respected the will of God. **Men of truth:** These men would speak that which is right and according to the will of God. **Who hate covetousness:** Since their work would lend themselves to be given money for their counsel, the men who would work in counseling must not be those who would use their position for the sake of money. Jethro's two qualifications for those who would do the work Moses had been doing, guarded the people from the covetousness of men. Since the people sought counsel from God, they should not be subjected to men who do not know the will of God or men who seek to minister the will of God for money, or have their judgments swayed by bribes. **Officials of thousands ... hundreds ... fifties ... tens:** Each official would be responsible to the one above him, and thus the final authority would reach to Moses who would still be God's appointed authority through whom the law of God would come. Jethro's system would allow the people to go to a higher court if they were not satisfied with the judgment of those officials over the smaller number of people. **If ... God so commands:** In order that such a plan be initiated, Jethro placed the final decision before Moses, who would seek God's final approval.

18:24-27 Moses ... did all that he had said: Though not recorded, we assume that Moses sought God's approval,

and the plan was put into action. This concept of judging civil matters in Israel was later written as part of the law (Dt 1:9-18). After Jethro had given his advice, and the organization of judgment was put into place, he returned to his own land. The wife of Moses, Zipporah, and his two sons, remained with Moses as the nation of Israelites moved on to Mt. Sinai.

Organization Of The Israelite Nation (19:1 – 40:38)

Outline: (1) Giving of the ten commandments (19:1 – 20:26), (2) Giving of civil laws (21:1 – 23:33), (3) Giving of ceremonial laws (24:1 – 31:18), (4) Sin of the golden calf (32:1-35), (5) Second set of stone tablets (33:1 - 34:35), (6) Construction of the tabernacle (35:1 – 39:43), (7) Dedication of the tabernacle (40:1-38).

Chapter 19 GIVING OF

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

19:1-6 It took three months for Israel to make the journey from the crossing of the Red Sea to when they reached the foot of Mt. Sinai. Some have assumed that they reached their destination on the day of Pentecost, but the meaning of the Hebrew phrase "same day" is too generic for this interpretation. Upon their arrival, Moses' first act was to go up the cloud covered mountain for instructions from God. When he went up the mountain, the first instructions that God wanted him to communicate to Israel was to remind them that He had carried them

out of Egypt on “eagles’ wings.” **Covenant:** It was at this time that God was bringing the nation into a covenant relationship with him. **Above all people:** It was not that they were a better people. We must keep in mind the reason why God was establishing a covenant with this nation of people, while at the same time driving out the nations who possessed the land of Canaan. God was seeking to preserve a segment of mankind for the coming of the Savior of the world, Jesus. Since society always digresses toward moral degradation as in the time before the flood of Noah (Gn 6:5), so God through Israel was seeking to maintain a holy nation for the delivery into the world of the Redeemer for the sins of mankind. **A kingdom of priests and a holy nation:** It is significant to remember this phrase, for in the New Testament it is stated that the church is a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:5,9). This statement is made of Israel before an inner priesthood was established through the sons of Levi. The lesson is that the entire nation was a priesthood that was set apart (holy) from the nations of the world. So is the church. The function of priest was to minister, and thus every member of the church is a ministering priest. The purpose for this is that God wants His people busy about doing good as believers in order to keep themselves separated from the ways of the world. It is not that God forgot the rest of the world when He separated Israel as a nation of priests. As a nation of priests they were to set the example for all other nations to follow. They were to minister the word of God to other nations,

for it was delivered to them on this occasion. Unfortunately, throughout their history the nation of Israel neglected their priesthood duties to other nations and conformed to the nations around them. As a result, the nation eventually ceased being God’s representative before the nations of the world.

19:7-9 We will do: The condition for Israel to remain in a covenant relationship with God was that they keep His commandments. The people thus made the vow in a time when everything was going well, but eventually they would forsake all that the Lord had commanded. **Thick cloud:** This was God’s reaffirming before the people that Moses was God’s official mediator between them and Him. What Israel heard from the cloud was a sound that they recognized was from God (20:1; Dt 4:11,12). They did not actually hear the audible words that Moses heard.

19:10-15 Sanctify them: These events began the process of separating the nation from their past. Every person was to wash. All clothes were to be washed. And for two full days there was to be no sexual intercourse among the people. During this process the people were to be fenced away from the mountain. If either man or beast touched the mountain, he was to be put to death. The purpose for keeping the people away was to guarantee that in their emotional euphoria in reference to the surreal event, they not climb the mountain where Moses would be in the days while he was conversing with God. This was not the time in history that people could come boldly

unto the presence of God (See Hb 4:16). ***They will come up to the mountain:*** When the signal was given, Moses, with the priests and elders, could come up the mountain, but only Moses was to approach unto God (24:1,2).

19:16-25 *Thunders and lightnings:*

The purpose for the events that took place at this time was that God was making a psychological change in the minds of the people (See Hb 12:21). They would need the impression of this traumatic event on their minds for the journey that they had before them. God knew that they would reject His will to immediately take the land. He would subsequently sentence them to forty years in the wilderness. What they experienced here would take them through the years of wandering, and then into the first generation of sons and daughters who would possess the promised land. ***Warn the people:*** In all the proceedings that were taking place, God knew that some would in their zeal possibly violate His command that they not come near the mountain. Some might presumptuously think that they had a right to ascend the mountain. But God demands that His will be obeyed, and that will was that only Moses and Aaron ascend the mountain.

Chapter 20

In our study from this point on in the giving of laws to Israel, we must keep in mind that the laws are given for the social well-being and health of the nation of Israel. The foundation upon which the laws were given was to make it possible for people to cohabit as a society. For

this reason, the Bible student must always seek for the reason behind the giving of any particular law. God has the best interest of His people at heart as He seeks to direct them to live as good citizens in the new nation they will be in the land of Canaan.

20:1 *God spoke:* God communicated to Moses through the language of men, but to the people the “voice” was an awesome sound that struck reverence in their hearts (see vs 18; 19:16; Dt 5:22).

20:3 *No other gods:* It was not that other gods existed. The gods about which He spoke here are the imaginations of men who create gods after their own image. The point is that God is above the thoughts of man who would seek to rebel against God, and then create religious behavior after their own lusts. Once one creates a religious behavior after his own lust, he then creates in his mind a god who approves of his behavior. ***Before Me:*** Though Israel would not give up her knowledge of the one true and living God, she would eventually bring into her theology beliefs in the gods of the nations around her. God knew that the Israelites would do this, and thus He here lays the foundation that He will not have any conceived gods in the minds of men controlling the behavior of His people.

20:4-6 *Graven image:* Once one creates a concept of a god in his mind, he makes for himself a physical likeness of this imagination in order to remind him of his creation. This is the spirit of idolatry. It is a spirit that is within men, for all men must have some god to control their behaviors. Without a knowledge of

the word of God, men create gods after their own behavior. For this reason, therefore, Israel was to make no images of conceived gods to whom they would give obeisance. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), the people of God need no physical object of worship or image that would remind them of their God. ***Not bow down yourself to them:*** It is not wrong to sculpture things that have religious significance, for such works were a part of the tabernacle (25:31-34) and the temple (1 Kg 6:18,29). Idolatry is making such things with the feeling that they have emotional power over those who make them. No physical object should be venerated as holy, and thus have some influence over the behavior and actions of people. It is not that a rock, or tree, or stick would have any power. The “power” is in the fact that one thinks such objects have supernatural power. It is idolatry to think that any physical thing of this world has supernatural power over people.

20:7 *Name of ... God in vain:* This would be calling upon the name of God for useless superstitious beliefs and practices of magic, or calling upon the dead in order to determine the destiny of things in this world. This would include the making of flippant oaths and promises in the name of God. The use of God’s name in profanity would be a violation of this commandment. Those who are godly will revere the name of God and use it in speech that is reverent and holy.

20:6-11 A commandment had to be made to rest on the seventh day because of man’s desire to consume himself with

work for the purpose of gain. The principle is that six days a week are sufficient to accomplish in labor that which is necessary for living. The Sabbath, therefore, is made for man to rest (Mk 2:23-28). ***Six days the Lord made heaven and earth:*** This one statement forever discards any theologies or scientific speculation that the earth and its inhabitants came into existence by some system of evolution over millions of years. It is not a question here as to whether these were six 24-hour days, since the context clearly explains that they are. Those who would believe the Bible, therefore, must believe that God created the heaven and earth in the six 24-hour days that are explained in Genesis 1. He could have created the heaven and earth in a shorter or greater time. But to establish an example for man in reference to his work, God set the pattern by the six 24-hour days of creation.

20:12 *Honor your father and your mother:* Respect for parents is the foundation upon which society is built. From the family comes individuals who are prepared for society, and thus when this principle is forsaken, society digresses into chaos (See comments Ep 6:1-3). ***Long in the land:*** If Israel would maintain the strength of their families, they as a nation would remain in the land of promise. Their removal from the land, which came many years after the giving of this commandment, was evidence that they failed to maintain the sanctity of the family. Whenever the family of any society breaks down, then the society breaks down.

20:13 The sanctity of life must be guarded in order to maintain social well being. If there is no regard for human life, then a society has digressed into social chaos. This commandment does not refer to capital punishment that was later given as a discipline for society to rid itself of those who give up their right to cohabit with society. Other commands are given later for deaths that took place as a result of accidental or justifiable homicide (See 21:13; 22:2; Nm 35:23). Jesus' quotation of this commandment from the Greek Septuagint is a commentary on what is here meant. "*You will not murder*" (Mt 19:18).

20:14 Sexual activity that violates the sanctity of the family is a manifestation of the breakdown of society. All illicit sexual activity outside the bond of marriage is a sign that family relationships have broken down, and thus relationships between individuals have digressed to the lust of the flesh (Compare Mt 5:28). Sexual immorality is always a sign that men place the lust of the flesh above their love of God.

20:15 Since this commandment assumes that one has the right to have personal property, any other person who obtains property through fraud or theft violates this commandment. Even if society as a whole would sanction fraud in one's work as an employee or his duty to pay taxes to the government under which he lives, it is a violation of the principle of this commandment. Stealing things from an employer or stealing from any person, are all under the condemnation of this commandment. Any act whereby

one would take that which belongs to another person or institution is stealing. When one steals, he is selfish and inconsiderate of his fellow man. The thief can have no true relationship with other people.

20:16 Slander, gossip, unproven accusations, false witnessing and half truths all fall under the judgment of this commandment. No man has a right to endanger the good name of another through falsehoods that come from his mouth. The one who bears false witness against another is selfish, thinking only evil of the one against whom he has borne a false report.

20:17 As with the previous four commandments, so also this commandment strikes at the heart of the individual. The covetous person is self-centered. His covetous heart will eventually lead him to do evil in reference to his neighbor. Since individuals in a society live in an economic relationship with one another, the integrity by which people deal with one another in business and labor is violated by the covetous person.

20:18-21 The response of the people to what had just transpired was only natural. In fear, they backed away from the mountain. *The people stood afar off ... Moses drew near:* We could conclude that the nature of the event struck terror in the hearts of the people. However, by faith Moses drew near. God wanted the people to fear, for fear generates reverence and obedience to the will of God. At this time in their history, Israel needed to understand that the God of heaven was not like the gods of Egypt from which

they had just come. The God of heaven was real and present, whereas the gods of Egypt were only the result of the imagination of men. And since they were the result of the imagination of men, they could be controlled by the thoughts of mere man, specifically the priests of Egypt.

20:22-26 Because of what had just transpired, the people asked Moses to mediate between them and God (vs 19). **You will not make other gods:** They were not to imagine other powers (gods) that would condone their misguided religious behavior. Since God created man with a great imagination, He knew that their imagination would run wild if they gave up a knowledge of God (See comments Rm 1:18-32). If they made an idol, the idol would be the evidence that they had given up their knowledge of the true and living God. The idol would be a witness against them, showing that they had rebelled against God. **Stone:** Their altars were to be made of uncut stone lest they be tempted to cut an image in the stone to a false god. **Steps:** In order to guard against the priest exposing his nakedness under his robe, there were to be no steps leading up to an altar (28:42).

Chapter 21

GIVING OF CIVIL LAWS

21:1-6 It was not that slavery existed at this time in Israel. The giving of the laws in reference to slaves is in view of the slavery they came out of in Egypt. God knew what would develop when they came into the land of Canaan. He knew that when one became so indebted

to another that he would have to give himself to the service of another until his debt was paid. **A Hebrew servant:** One who was poverty stricken could sell himself to a fellow Hebrew in order to pay off his debt. However, after six years of service, he would be relieved of his obligation (See Lv 25:44-46). If he had a wife when he came into slavery, he could take her with him when he was set free. But if he married a fellow slave and had children, he could not take either her or the children if he chose to be set free. **Pierce his ear:** If one wanted to remain a slave forever in the house of his master, then his ear was to be pierced, symbolizing that he would listen to another for instructions for the rest of his life.

21:7-11 The probable reason for the following law concerning female bond-servants was to better the life of a father's daughter by marrying her into an economically advantaged family. The regulations prevented a wealthier family from taking advantage of a poorer family. The female slaves, therefore, were socially protected more than the male slaves. At the end of six years, she also could go free (See Dt 15:12-17). In this case, if a father sold his daughter to become a wife to his master or his master's son, and the husband was not pleased with her, she could be redeemed (bought back) by the father. However, her husband could not sell her to a foreigner. If she was given to his son as a wife, then she was to be counted as one of his daughters. If she became a second wife, all her rights as a wife were to be continued. If the husband failed to provide any of his duties

toward her, she was free without charge.

21:12-17 The murderer who violated the sixth commandment was to be put to death under God's law. Since the society of Israel was not to be a society of jails, those who gave up their right to life by willingly taking the life of another, were to be taken out of society. *Lie in wait:* God made a distinction between the accidental killing and intentional murder of another person. *Place:* These would later be identified as the refuge cities (Nm 35:22-28). It was to these cities the manslayer was to flee until the time when he could be properly tried. If found guilty of intentional killing of another, he was to die. *Altar:* Some believed that they could flee to an altar for refuge. But if convicted, the guilty person was to be taken from the altar and executed. *Strikes ... father ... mother:* The parents were God's authority over children, and thus if a child who was at an age where he was judged accountable for his or her own actions, and this accountable child struck a parent, that child was to be executed. *Curse:* This would be invoking God to act against His representative on earth, the parent.

21:18,19 If a dispute between two people ended in one striking another with either a fist or stone, with no intent to kill, and the victim did not die, but could rise and walk, then the penalty was that the one who made the striking blow had to pay for loss of time for the victim and medically care for him until he was completely recovered.

21:20,21 These laws were given in view of the fact that some Israelites had

to give themselves to the slavery of another because of debt that could not be repaid. In the civil laws of Israel's society, there were strict laws in reference to the care of slaves. If a master struck a slave, and after a day or two the slave recovered, then the master would suffer no penalty. But if the slave died, the master was to suffer all economic loss.

21:22,23 If a pregnant wife intervened in a fight between her husband and another person, and the wife lost the unborn infant, then the one who hurt the wife was to pay a fine that was determined by the judges. If the death of the infant was accidental, then the offender would not suffer the death penalty. But if it was intentional, then he was subject to the death penalty.

21:24-27 The retaliation law that was given to Israel was more lenient than the law that existed previous to the giving of the law to Israel. In reference to this law, Jesus stated that love should prevail over the will to retaliate against one's neighbor (Mt 5:38-48). In reference to slaves, if a tooth or eye was harmed by a master, the slave was to be set free.

21:28-32 It would be criminal negligence on the part of an owner of an ox if he knew the animal was dangerous, but did nothing to protect others from such an animal. Therefore, a victim's family was to be compensated for the person who was killed by a dangerous ox. The owner would have to pay the compensation in order to escape the death penalty.

21:33-36 With the policy of open range in Israel, open pits and wells had

to be protected. If they were not, and a neighbor's animal fell in the pit, then the one who owned the pit was responsible. If one ox killed another, and the ox that killed was not known for being a dangerous animal, then the two owners would share the selling price of the surviving ox.

Chapter 22

22:1-4 If a thief was caught and slain in the act of his theft, no blame was to be made against the owner of what the thief was trying to steal. But if the owner waited until the day light to slay the thief, then he was guilty of the death of the thief.

22:5,6 Though there was open range grazing allowed, there was still the right to own private fields and property. No man's livestock was allowed to graze on another's private property.

22:7-13 One man could entrust his possessions or livestock into the hand of a neighbor. These protective laws were to direct the proper handling of a man's possessions if they were entrusted to another for safe keeping. If one were entrusted with the possessions of another person, he was to protect the possessions as if they were his own.

22:14,15 This law emphasized the ethical principle that if one borrowed another's possession, then he was fully responsible for the safe keeping of the possession. If the possession was lost or damaged without the presence of the owner, then the borrower was responsible for restoring what was lost. ***If it is hired:*** Since the cost of the hired possession

would include the replacement of the item, the one who hired the possession did not have to repay the cost if it was damaged or lost.

22:16,17 Since a father expected that the marriage of his daughter would bring him a dowry, the seduction of a daughter was considered theft. The laws in reference to seduction were thus in reference to violating the commandments against stealing, not adultery.

22:18-20 ***A witch:*** This was a person who sought to captivate the minds of others through the practice of magical tricks (sorcery). In such a practice the witch was distracting the thinking of people away from God and His will. Since it was the practice of witches to distract the minds of the people away from God, they were not allowed to exist in Israel. ***Lies with an animal:*** Sexual intercourse with an animal was wickedness that could not be tolerated in Israel. Such perversion was the practice of many of the pagan religions of the Cannanites whom God judged through the proxy of Israel. ***Any god:*** See Dt 13:1-16.

22:21-24 ***Alien:*** Israel was to remember that she was an alien in the land of Egypt, and thus was not to oppress any stranger (foreigner) who was in the land or who was passing through the land. ***Widow ... fatherless:*** In His tender compassion toward the widows and orphans, God warned that no one should add to the affliction of these people (See Js 1:27). Unfortunately, throughout their history, they eventually forgot this commandment. As a result, their women and children became widows and orphans as

God judged Israel through invading armies.

22:25-27 Lend money: Reference here could possibly be to one taking an advance on his salary in order to buy food. If a coat were taken as a pledge, it was to be returned before sundown, before the coolness of the night set in.

22:28-31 All citizens were to respect their leaders. Once a ruler of the people had been selected, he was to be held in honor by the people. **First ... fruits ... firstborn:** The first cuttings of the harvest belonged to God, as well as the firstborn of the families and animals (13:12). Of the livestock, the firstborn was to stay with the mother in order that the mother be reassured. On the eighth day the animal was to be given to the Lord for a sacrifice. **Torn by beasts:** Many of the laws that were given in reference to food, were given for health reasons. In this case, the animal that was torn, or the one that killed the torn beast, could have been diseased. Therefore, they were not to eat of either animal.

Chapter 23

23:1-9 As most of the laws that were given to Israel, these laws all have to deal with one's relationship with his neighbor. These are minor civil ordinances that would direct one's behavior toward his neighbor after the manner of loving one's neighbor as himself. **Bribe:** That which corrupts justice most is the act of persuading the judge's favor through a gift (See 1 Sm 8:3; Is 1:23; 5:23). When a society has resorted to bribes in its justice system, it has become a corrupt so-

ciety in which there is no real integrity. Justice is always twisted when a bribe is involved.

23:10-13 Seventh year: It was beneficial for the land not to be worked for a year every seven years. Not only was this command for the benefit of the poor, it was a benefit to the land. The command assumes that the farmer will store up enough on the sixth year to carry him over to the seventh, thus teaching a "saving culture" in Israel. However, it also assumes that the farmer would stagger his "seventh year" planting with different fields. While one field was "resting" during the seventh year, other fields would be producing while not in their seventh year. When a field was in its seventh year, the poor were allowed to use the land.

23:14-19 The Israelite males were to appear before the Lord at three special feasts. The feast of the unleavened bread, which was associated with the Passover (12:14; Lv 23:5), was kept at the beginning of the harvest and commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The feast of harvest, or Pentecost (Lv 23:15-22; Nm 28:26-31; Dt 16:9-12), was kept at the conclusion of the harvest and commemorated Israel's passage through the Red Sea. The feast of the ingathering, which was also called the feast of tabernacles (Lv 23:34-43; Nm 29:12-40; Dt 16:13,14), was observed in the autumn when all crops had been gathered in for storage. This feast was in thanksgiving for God's mercy in their wandering through the wilderness.

23:20-22 Angel: This was the mes-

senger of God, which at this time was manifested in the pillar of the cloud and fire. The Angel was to be obeyed for his presence in Israel was the authority of God among His people.

23:23-33 Their gods: These were the gods that had been created after the misguided thinking of the people who dwelt in the land. Men have civil laws that control society in order to prevent anarchy. However, men who are ignorant of the one true and living God will seek to bring men under the control of imagined spirits and ghosts. Since it is the religious nature of men to submit to their religious inclinations, Israel was here warned not to bring their minds into the captivity of the imagined spirits (gods) of the people of the Canaanites. Those who would believe in such gods have brought themselves into the captivity of the imagination of men, and thus their beliefs become a snare to their behavior. **Boundary:** Israel's western borders would be from the Mediterranean Sea south to the Red Sea. On the east, they would be from the Euphrates River in the north to the desert in the Negev. It was only during the days of Solomon that Israel eventually possessed all the territory within these borders (See 1 Kg 4:21-24; 2 Ch 9:26).

Chapter 24

GIVING OF CEREMONIAL LAWS

24:1-8 Moses had already been on the mountain (19:3). He received the book of the covenant that was to be sealed. **Elders:** Moses was now to return to the presence of God on the moun-

tain, taking with him the heads of the families of Israel. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders were to worship at a distance, with only Moses approaching near unto God. The people were to stay away from the mountain (19:12,13).

Book of the covenant: These would be the words of 20:22 to 23:33. **Burnt offerings:** These offerings were given in reference to sin, while the peace offerings were given in recognition of God's mercy. **Blood:** This was the first covenant that God made with Israel. It was consecrated with the blood (life) of animals. A new and second covenant would later come in their history that would be consecrated by the blood of Jesus (See Hb 8:6 - 9:28).

24:9-11 In the party that went to meet with God, Moses represented the God-ordained leader of the people. Aaron, Nadab and Abihu represented the religious leadership. The seventy elders were the civil leaders, or nobles who were highly respected by the people. **They saw the God of Israel:** This is a theophany, and thus we must not assume that God has the physical appearance of a man, for God is spirit (Jn 4:24; see Ex 33:20-23). On this occasion, God revealed Himself in a manner that was discernible by the human eye. This appearance was possibly a vision. **Ate and drank:** This is one event that explains that many of the sacrificial offerings were eaten in fellowship with one another in the presence of God. This sacrifice was offered to God, but was to be eaten by those who made the sacrifice. Though we do not understand all that went on during this event, the

nobles were able to eat and drink in the presence of God, and yet, not be in fear. This is surely a picture of eternal heaven when the faithful will dwell in the presence of God for eternity.

24:12-18 Since Israel had come out of a nation wherein religious rites and ceremonies were the result of religious men who had invented imagined gods and religions, the remainder of this book describes correct forms and regulations concerning people, places, rites and ceremonies that would stay with Israel for centuries. **Tablets of stone:** The ten commandments were written on tablets of stone (31:18; Dt 5:22). However, the instructions concerning the tabernacle and the function of the priests were written on the common writing material of the day. **A cloud covered the mountain:** Moses and Joshua remained together for six days before God appeared to Moses only. Moses then went to meet God. He stayed for forty days and nights on the mountain (Dt 9:9). During this time he fasted.

Chapter 25

25:1-9 See also 35:4-19. The gold, silver and brass that were willingly contributed here came from their plunder of the Egyptians, as well as their conquest over the Amalekites. **Yarn:** This was a soft linen that was spun from flax. **Goat's hair:** This hair was spun and used for the making of tents. **Badgers skins:** Since badgers were not native to north Africa or the Sinai Peninsula, we would assume that reference here could be to some creature of the sea. **Acacia wood:**

This wood is sometimes referred to as shittim wood. It is a wood that is commonly found throughout the Sinai Peninsula. **Oil:** See 27:20. **Onyx:** It is not known specifically what this was. **Dwell among them:** Since no structure of man can contain God, the meaning here is that it would be through the tabernacle that God would make His presence known. **Sanctuary:** With the use of this word reference is probably to the entire structure of the tabernacle, including the main tent and the outer court curtain. **Pattern of the tabernacle:** See Hb 8:5. In other places it is referred to as the tent of meeting (27:21), tabernacle of the Lord (Nm 16:9), and the tabernacle of testimony (38:21).

25:10-22 See 37:1-29. **Ark:** This was the most sacred object of the Jewish nation. It was referred to as the ark of the testimony (vs 22), the ark of the Lord (1 Sm 4:6), the ark of God (1 Sm 3:3), and the ark of the covenant (Dt 10:8). If we consider a cubit to be about 18 inches or about 40 centimeters, this chest that was made of acacia wood would be more than one meter long (3 feet, 9 inches) and 60 centimeters wide and deep (2 feet, 3 inches). Within the ark were placed the two tablets of stone that God gave to Moses that bore the ten commandments (31:18). **Mercy seat:** Measuring the same dimensions as the ark, the mercy seat symbolized God's mercy in His atonement for the sins of Israel. **Cherubim:** First mentioned in Genesis 3:24, these were an order of angels who symbolized the presence of God. The form into which these were made is not known.

25:23-30 The table of showbread was the same size as the ark. It was also made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. Showbread was to be placed on the table continually in order to symbolize the continuing care of God for His people. The twelve loaves were to be changed every Sabbath (Lv 24:5,6).

25:31-40 It is interesting that archaeological evidence proves that the lampstand existed as far back as 1,400 B.C., confirming this description of what the lampstand resembled. There were six branches to the lampstand, with one stem, thus making seven saucer-like ends to each branch. These were lit at night in order to give light in the tabernacle. *After the pattern:* This is another exhortation that all things be made according to the directions that God gave Moses. The meaning is more than directions for proper construction. God wanted to remind the people that the religious behavior and symbols of their life should be according to His directions, and not patterned after the polytheism of Egypt from where they came.

Chapter 26

26:1-14 The dimensions of the tabernacle were 15 feet by 45 feet (about 4.5 meters by about 14.7 meters). The tabernacle was built in order to be mobile. Not only would Israel move this tent structure throughout the wilderness in their forty years of wandering, but when they came into the land of promise they were to move the tabernacle among the possessions of the tribes. God's original plan was that there be no permanent

structure in Israel that symbolized His presence.

26:15-30 The detail into which the Lord goes to have the tabernacle constructed is not without purpose. There was no such structure in Egypt, and thus after construction, the nations that would know Israel after their departure from Sinai could not accuse them of making a copy of something they had experienced in Egypt. The detail of construction would be a witness that there was divine intervention and revelation concerning the structure. We also must not forget that the design and quality of the tabernacle itself was for durability. Tabernacles as this would stay with Israel for centuries. God's original plan was that the tabernacle be the only symbol of God's presence in Israel. It was to be moved among the tribal possessions, and thus no permanent location or structure was in the original plan of God for Israel. The tabernacle was to be continuously rebuilt and moved among the possessions of Israel. The plans in this context were given in detail in order to give guidelines for reconstruction since a tent made of canvas would last only about 10-15 years.

26:31-37 The purpose of the veil was to divide the tabernacle into two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place. The ark of the testimony was to be placed in the most holy place. In the holy place were to be placed the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense that was placed just before the veil. Since the high priest was the only one allowed to enter into the most holy place, the sym-

bolism was established at this time for Jesus who would later enter into heaven through the veil for the sins of all men (See Mt 27:51; Hb 10:19). Since there is New Testament reference to the tabernacle, with its veil, we must conclude that at this time God was having Israel build an illustration of what would take place in reference to the redemptive work of His Son centuries later. We must conclude, therefore, that the very existence of the tabernacle and its construction was not meant to satisfy Israel's desire for a symbol of God's presence, but to set the stage for the coming of the Son of God and the resulting church.

Chapter 27

27:1-8 See 38:1-7. The altar of burnt offerings was placed just outside the tabernacle, but in front of the outer court of the tabernacle. The laver was placed between the altar of burnt offering and the entrance to the tabernacle. The altar of burnt offering was the continual reminder of Israel's need for the atoning sacrifices for their sins. Since the altars of Israel were to be made of uncut stone (20:24,25), it is believed that this altar was a boxlike structure that was filled with dirt. The sacrifices were then made on top of the structure. The horns on the altar signified God's protection and ability to help (1 Kg 1:50). During a sacrifice on the altar these horns were smeared with blood (Lv 4:7).

27:9-19 Court: The court, or outer fence of cloth, enclosed the tabernacle itself. It was a rectangle of about 46 meters (150 feet) by 23 meters (75 feet).

The construction of the tabernacle complex began from the most simple and progressed to the more ornate. No unclean person could come inside the court area. The court fence of cloth was simple, but the tabernacle was more ornate. In the tabernacle itself, all the priests could function, but in the most elaborate area (the most holy place) only the high priest could go, and then only once a year. The symbolism was that only God's anointed could go into the most sacred place, whereas the most common had to stay at a distance, separated by the holy place, and then the outer court.

27:20,21 The pure oil was beaten from olives that were picked just before ripening. The oil lamps were to be burning every night, which burning probably symbolized that God's presence would never leave Israel (See 30:8; 1 Sm 3:3).

Chapter 28

28:1-5 The garments that are described in this chapter were for the high priest, for Aaron and his successor. The purpose for the ornate garments was for two reasons. First, the garments were a sign to all that God had designated the heritage of Aaron to function as priests throughout the generations of Israel. The style of their clothing would be a reminder to both the people and Aaron's sons that they were established as the mediators between God and Israel. Second, the ornate beauty of the priests' garments brought their clothing into conformity with the beauty of the tabernacle.

28:6-14 Ephod: This part of the priest's clothing was a waistcoat. It had

a front and back and was strapped on the body of the priest with straps over the shoulders to hold it in place. The names of the tribes of the children of Israel were engraved on the onyx stones, signifying that the priests carried the responsibility of being the mediators for the people before God at all times.

28:15-30 Breastplate: This part of the attire of the priests was fastened to the ephod. It symbolized judgment in reference to the oracles of God. Upon the breastplate that was close to the heart of the priest, were again written the names of the children of Israel. The priest thus functioned as the one before whom judgments were sought from God.

28:31-35 Robe: This blue garment was worn under the ephod and breastplate. Pomegranates and bells of gold were to be placed on the hem of the robe. The pomegranates symbolized fruitfulness. Some have thought that they represented God's nurture of the soul. The bells were to prove that the priest was in service inside the tabernacle when the people could not see him.

28:36-39 Turban: The "mitre," or turban, was to be worn on the head of the high priest. The phrase "Holiness to the Lord" was to be engraved on the turban in order to remind the people that the high priest portrayed the holiness of God. The portrayal of God to be holy through the garments of the high priest was to inspire them to be likewise (See Lv 11:45). The work of the high priest was to bring the people of God before God. It was his task to present them as a holy people (Compare Ti 2:14; Hb 12:14).

28:40-43 As the high priest, the other priests were also dressed in order to distinguish them from the people, as well as to signify that they were separated from the people for the ministry of the people. If the priests did not adhere to the clothing that is herein prescribed, they were subject to the death penalty.

Chapter 29

29:1-9 The clothing of the priests was described in chapter 28. In this chapter the priests themselves are consecrated. They are set apart for the service for which God had chosen them. Aaron was set forth as the high priest, and his sons as priests (See Lv 8:7-9). These men were established as priests for the rest of their lives. Their successors would also be priests for life. Since Christians make up a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:5,9), after the pattern established for priests of God, they also are on duty as priests for the rest of their lives. Jesus is now functioning as our high priest (Hb 5:6), but all Christians function as God's priests to the world.

29:10-18 Sin offering: One of the conditions for the priests to offer sin offerings for the people was that they first had to sacrifice for their own sins (See Hb 5:3). **Put their hands:** This was an act that signified that the priests symbolically put their sins on the animal that was to be sacrificed. Sin offerings were made in order to illustrate that in reference to our relationship with God, life had to be taken in order to receive atonement. Once the blood was placed on the horns of the altar, the fat was burned upon the

altar and the rest of the body parts were burned outside the camp (See Hb 13:11,12). **Burnt offering:** Sin offerings and burnt offerings were not eaten by either the priests or the people (Lv 4:1,12; see 10:17-20). The burnt offering focused on the meaning that the one who gave the offering was surrendering his life to God, whereas the sin offering was made for the sins of the one who had given himself to God.

29:19-37 Ear: The blood on the tip of the right ear of the priests dedicated their hearing to God. **Thumb:** The hands of the priests were dedicated to service of God. **Toe:** The priests' entire walk of life was also dedicated to God. **Blood and oil:** The blood of atonement was mixed with the oil of spiritual healing. **Wave offering:** This was a symbolic waving of the sacrifice that indicated its dedication to God, though the sacrifice was eaten. **Eat those things:** Except for the sin offering and burnt offering, sacrifices were to be eaten either by the priests, the one who gave the sacrifice, or both. The eating of the sacrifice symbolized fellowship between God and the one who made the sacrifice, as well as fellowship between the priest and the one who made the offering.

29:38-46 Lambs: These were the young and innocent. A lamb was to be offered daily in the morning, and the other in the evening. **One-tenth of an ephah:** Some translations use the word "deal" for ephah. This is about seven pints or about three and a half liters. **Hin:** This is about a gallon and a half, or a little over five and a half liters. **I am the**

Lord their God: The ceremonial laws that came with Israel's covenant with God were to be a continual reminder to Israel that God was the one who delivered them out of bondage. Their obedience to these ceremonial laws was a continual manifestation that they recognized and accepted God's deliverance. The ceremonial keeping of the laws in reference to their sin continually reminded them that they needed the atonement of God. Though it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats would bring forgiveness of sins (Hb 10:1-4), all these sacrifices prepared Israel for the final sacrifice for sin in Jesus Christ. The sin offering thus pointed to the coming atoning sacrifice of Jesus. The burnt offering symbolized the commitment of the sinner to Christ. The sacrifices of dedication symbolized the consecration and sanctification of the one making the sacrifices. The fact that the sacrificing was performed daily, meant that their entire lives were consecrated to God (See Rm 12:1). And in obedience through the sacrifices, God dwelt in them, as He does today through the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 30

30:1-10 Altar ... to burn incense: This altar was smaller, but similar to the altar of burnt offerings. It was set in front of the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. At this altar, God met with the one who was offering incense every day (See Hb 9:4). **Perpetual incense:** It was not that it burned continually, but that the action of offering the incense was a daily practice. **Strange**

incense: The incense that was offered had to be according to God's description (see vss 34-38), thus indicating that obedience must be learned and continued by God's people. **Atonement ... once a year:** This took place on the day of atonement. The high priest would place blood on this altar for the atonement of the sins of the people. The symbolism of this altar was in preparation for the work of Christ to come. The incense was used by John in Revelation to symbolize the prayers of the saints (Rv 8:3). At the altar of burnt offering outside the tabernacle, atonement was made for the sins of the people, while at the altar of incense, a sweet smelling incense went up to God from the worshipers, thus signifying God's continual fellowship with His people. The incense offered on the altar of incense, therefore, completed the sin offering on the altar of burnt offering. In reference to the Christian, his continual offering of prayer after the meaning of the altar of incense is meaningful because of the atonement of his sins at the altar of burnt offering. Because Christ became the sin offering for the saints, they have the privilege of having their continual prayers answered as they go up to God as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

30:11-16 Take a census: Earlier accounting of the population of Israel was probably a guess as to the number of people in Israel. But here the purpose of the accounting is to request a free-will offering from the Israelites. **Ransom for his soul:** The word "ransom" means expiation. What was here required was a tax for every male of Israel who was

twenty years old and older. The amount that was required, a half shekel, was small. Since everyone was to pay the same, the tax equalized everyone, rich and poor. The rich could not claim any advantage over the poor by being able to contribute more. Everyone had to pay the same, and thus be considered the same in reference to God's favor. **Atonement money:** It was atonement money in the sense that it reminded the giver that in no way could one atone for his own sins. Since the contribution was only a half shekel, one would rightly conclude that the greatness of his sins could not be bought, no matter how much or how little one gave. Since atonement cannot be bought, then no amount of money can pay the price for our sins. **Service of the tabernacle:** This contribution probably became an annual obligation tax in Israel in the years to come (2 Ch 24:9). This is the tax to which Peter referred in Matthew 17:24-27.

30:17-21 Laver: Placed between the tabernacle and altar of burnt offerings, this bronze bowl was designated for ceremonial washing. The priests were to wash themselves after making sacrifices before entering the tabernacle. They did this in order to symbolize their sanctification as priests before God.

30:22-33 Perfumer: This was the art of apothecary. Those who had this skill knew how to make this special oil from the four designated ingredients. The mixture was to be used first to anoint the tabernacle and its furniture in order to set them apart for their intended function. Once the tabernacle and its furniture were

sanctified, no one was to touch them except those who were also sanctified. Thus the priests were also anointed with oil in order to be sanctified for their service in the tabernacle.

30:34-38 The incense was to produce a sweet-smelling aroma for the priest who conducted sacrifices at the tabernacle. Though the aroma of the incense would remind the people of the pleasant atmosphere of God's presence, it also had a very practical use. In the midst of many slayings of animals for sacrifices, the sweet aroma of the perfume aided the senses of the priests who had to work in such an environment.

Chapter 31

31:1-11 The principle behind the appointment of skilled artisans to perform the work of building the tabernacle and its furniture is that God will not do for man what man can do for himself. God gave the generic description of what had to be done. It was the duty of the skilled artisans to use their judgment as to how to make the materials and determine many of the details. These two men possibly had great leadership skills, and thus through them God wanted to direct the building of the tabernacle according to His own will. *I have filled him:* Bezaleel was inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry out the instructions to build the tabernacle. With his assistant, Aholiab, he was to create the beauty of the tabernacle in a way that it would manifest the splendor of God. *Wisdom:* He was given wisdom to lead those who were chosen to complete the tasks set before them. His

judgments were thus inspired in order that he lead the workers to comply with the will of God in reference to the construction of the tabernacle. *Understanding:* This was the ability to organize the parts of the tabernacle to be completed in order to organize the workers to accomplish the task of construction. *Knowledge:* He was given the knowledge of what materials to use, as well as how to bring these materials together into the final goal of the constructed tabernacle and its furniture.

31:12-17 It is possible that in their zeal to complete the building of the tabernacle, the builders would violate the Sabbath. For this reason, instructions concerning the Sabbath are again reemphasized. *A sign:* With circumcision (ch 17), the Sabbath was given by God for a sign of the covenant between Israel and God. These two signs were distinguishing marks that separated Israel from the nations around them. No other nation adopted the sign of the Sabbath. Even during the times of the Roman economy, the Jews alone were known by their keeping of the Sabbath. As long as the Israelites circumcised their males and kept the Sabbath, they were signaling to God that they would keep the covenant. *Throughout your generations:* The generations of Israel ended in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). The keeping of the Sabbath is not now a sign of the covenant that Christians enjoy with God. It was a sign given only to Israel, and thus excluded all other nations, including Christians who are now the nation of God. For this reason, the Sabbath is no longer a sign of a covenant

between God and His people. **Put to death:** The keeping of the Sabbath was the individual's recognition that he was in a covenant relationship with God. If the Sabbath were violated, then the one violating the Sabbath was proclaiming that he was not in a covenant with God. The death penalty for violating of the Sabbath manifested that Israel was to take very seriously their covenant relationship with God. The Sabbath does not parallel Sunday, since Sunday is not a sign of the covenant that the Christian has with God.

31:18 This event concluded Moses' forty days on the mountain. **Tablets:** Moses was initially asked to come to the mountain for the stone tablets (24:12). Once given to Moses, they were to be placed in the ark (25:16). Though Moses later broke the original tablets of stone in his frustration with Israel (32:19), God gave him a set of new tablets on which were written the ten commandments, the Decalogue (34:4; 40:20). **Finger of God:** Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus does not have a literal finger as a man, we do not know that to which this metaphor refers. The meaning is that the writing was from God, as the writing of man originates from his hands. What is important to remember is that God Himself wrote the commandments on the stones.

Chapter 32

SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF

32:1-6 Less than forty days after Moses departed to go up the mountain, the people fell into apostasy. We do not know how long it took them to build the proposed idol, but after forty days Moses

returned from the mountain. Assuming that Moses had deserted them, the people approached Aaron for leadership. However, they demanded of Aaron that he sanction an expression of their own religiosity, that is, build the golden calf. **Make us gods:** This is typical of misguided religious people. They want a visual expression of their beliefs. Since men are physical, they want to see physical expressions of their beliefs. It was not that they became atheistic in reference to their belief in the God. They simply regressed to wanting some divine visual manifestation of leadership which the magicians of Egypt performed and provided in reference to the religions of Egypt. Because they pressed on Aaron to make the idol, the scenario seems to be that in order to avoid an outright rebellion, Aaron succumbed to the intimidation of some misguided religionists. In a time when Aaron could have stood up against the people as did Moses with moral leadership, he bowed to their requests. The lesson is clear. Unless leaders are willing to stand alone against the misguided desires of the people, they have no right to be leaders for God. **Calf:** This was a common form of idols among the Egyptians. The bull represented strength and fertility. As with most ancient idols, the original form was made of wood, and then overlaid with gold. **These are your gods:** The apostasy was complete. Focus was now diverted from God to the gods they had created after their own imagination, which imagination was still in the bondage of Egyptian idolatry. **Aaron ... built an altar:** It

seems that Aaron sought to mix beliefs concerning the God of Israel with the gods the people had created after their own imagination from their Egyptian culture. It could be that some of the Egyptians who came with them in the exodus were influencing them to revert back to the gods of the Egyptians. In order to keep the name of God before the people, Aaron dedicated the altar he built to the one true and living God.

32:7-10 The apostasy of Israel while Moses was on the mountain would be the ultimate test of Moses' moral leadership. He was on a spiritual high with God on the mountain and the people fell to a spiritual low with pagan concepts of gods at the foot of the mountain. God thus informed Moses of the apostasy before he left the mountain in order to help him deal with this spiritual tragedy in Israel. **Corrupted themselves:** The people were now "your people" which he, Moses, had brought out of Egypt. Since they had given themselves over to idol gods, God gave them over to themselves. Once given over by God, they were under His condemnation. **Stiffnecked:** This word originally referred to an ox that would not submit to the control of a yoke. The fact that Israel had so quickly turned aside unto the gods of their imagination revealed that they were a stiffnecked people. They were a people who had not yet learned submission. It would be this generation of people that God would eventually take out of the Hebrew culture during the wilderness wanderings. **Make of you a great nation:** The patient wrath of God was so great that He

would start another nation through Moses, wait for possibly another several centuries, and then call them to a covenant relationship. He would have done this very thing if Moses had not interceded on behalf of Israel. Moses realized that God would rain down judgment on the people. He thus resisted the opportunity to exalt himself by pleading for Israel's case.

32:11-14 We must not conclude that God, in His foreknowledge, did not know that this event would take place. He allowed the rebellion to happen in order to manifest the mediatorship of Moses on their behalf. There would be in the history of Israel another mediator who would be like unto Moses. He, Jesus, would also plead for the deliverance of God's people from the wrath of God. This occasion thus defines the grace of God that would eventually come through Jesus as our mediator with God, before whom we deserve judgment because of our sin. **Changed His mind:** Some translations say, "repented." The phrase is an anthropomorphic human expression used to refer to the action of God in reference to the behavior of man. The meaning is simply that God changed His direction from destruction to preservation.

32:15-19 **The two tablets:** There is symbolism here in reference to Moses' breaking the two tablets on which the ten commandments were written. When Israel rebelled by going after other gods, they broke the covenant. The act of breaking the two tablets symbolized the breaking of the covenant. Their breaking of the covenant demanded that jus-

tice be carried out. But mercy prevailed, and Israel was spared. Once God's wrath was turned, the tablets were once again produced as a sign of the covenant that God would retain with Israel.

32:20-24 *Drink of it:* The wood of the idol burned and the gold was ground to powder. The people were made to drink of their own sin. ***Aaron:*** Aaron blamed the people for his weakness. He succumbed to their intimidation to have their religion as they would construct it after the false gods of Egypt. Religious leaders who do not repent of such weakness are no good for truth. Too often religious leaders try to behave as politicians. They seek the opinion of the people, and then construct religious ceremonies after the desires of the people. In doing so, they lead the people away from God. ***Slay:*** The punishment was to be severe. Every rebellious soul was to be wiped out of the camp of Israel. It was not a time for repentance on the part of the rebellious. It was a time to extract the rebellious from the people of God. In this way God would deal with those who would seek to turn His people unto their own imaginations. ***Bestow a blessing on you this day:*** The fact that the Levites performed the executions exalted them to their function as the protectors of the will of God among the people (See Nm 3:6-13). They were the proxy judges through whom God slew the rebellious of Israel.

32:30-35 The breaking of the tablets indicated the breaking of the covenant with the nation, though God continued in His covenant that He had made

with Abraham (Gn 12:1-4). At this time, after Moses had interceded for the nation that they be spared from destruction by God, Moses went up the mountain again before God to mediate on their behalf for atonement. If God would not forgive them, then he asked if he could be cut off from fellowship with God for the sake of the nation (See comments Rm 9:1-3). ***Blot out of My book:*** God's answer to Moses was that accountability for sin rested with individuals. Though to this point in the narrative we get the impression that the entire nation went into apostasy, the truth is that certain individuals participated in and led the rebellion. We must not judge the whole by the sins of the few, though the whole may be led into apostasy by the few. But for the nation, Moses worked as a true mediator. He confessed their sin before God, sought for God's forgiveness on behalf of the people, and then offered himself as a sacrifice for the people. ***The Lord plagued the people:*** There were consequences for their rebellion. Though the sin was forgiven, they had to live with the consequences.

Chapter 33 SECOND SET OF STONE TABLETS

33:1-3 *An angel:* Though God has accepted Moses' intercession and their repentance, one thing changed in God's commission to them to go to the land of milk and honey. God would send the angel before them, but He Himself would not go with them. If He were with them, He knew that He would have to bring

down judgment on them because they were a stiffnecked people. For this reason, God stayed at a distance lest He destroy them.

33:4-6 Because God said that He would no longer personally be with them, the people were saddened. They thus realized the result of their sin, that it brought a distance between the sinner and God (See Is 59:1,2). **Ornaments:** As a test of their repentance, they were to remove the ornaments that would possibly cover up any sign of remorse.

33:7-11 Reference here is to Moses' tent, which is also translated "tabernacle." **Outside the camp:** Because of the sin in the camp of Israel, Moses' moving of his tent outside the camp of Israel signified that if people wanted to call on God through Moses, they had to go outside the camp. God grieved over the sin of Israel, and thus Moses' removal of his tent outside the camp of Israel illustrated to the people that God could not dwell where sin was. **Assembly:** Some translations use the word "congregation" to translate the Hebrew word that is used here. But the word "assembly" better defines the meaning. It was not a tent or tabernacle in which people assembled, but a structure around which they assembled.

33:12-17 This is the third time that Moses interceded for Israel (See 32:11-14, 30-35). It is here that Moses was reassured by God that He would be with him as he led the people from Mt. Sinai. Moses was thus calling on the grace of God to overlook their sin in order to be with them as a nation. **My presence will**

go with you: With the reassurance of this statement, Moses could confidently lead. Strong leaders perceive the presence of God in their lives. The power of their leadership is in their confidence that God is leading them in their destiny to fulfill His will in their lives.

33:18-23 Show me Your glory: The more one experiences the presence of God, the more one desires to experience more of the glory of God. Here Moses seeks to walk by sight, and thus the request was bold. **While My glory passes by:** It is the glory that would pass by Moses. Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), we must conclude that the inspired writer here uses metaphor to explain the presence of God. Specifically, an anthropomorphism is used, that is, human characteristics are applied to God. Since there is no language of man that can explain the incomprehensible God who is spirit, what transpired here leaves us wanting more. But the God who here reveals Himself in some way to Moses is beyond the definitions of the words in our dictionary. The biblical interpreter would do well to caution himself concerning passages as this, lest he bring the incomprehensible God down to a being that is no greater than the definition of our words or bodily forms.

Chapter 34

34:1-4 Now that the people had restored themselves to God, it was time for God to renew the covenant. Moses thus ascended the mountain again in order to receive the law that was written on tablets of stone. On this occasion Moses

would have to make the tablets, and God would write upon them, whereas on the first occasion God both made the stones and wrote upon them (32:16).

34:5-9 The nature and character of God are here explained in the words merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, and forgiving. God is merciful, but merciful only to those who are repentant (See Hb 6:4-6).

34:10-17 What God would now do in the lives of the Israelites would inspire awe. He would drive out the Canaanites before them, and give them the land that He had promised to Abraham. **Do not worship any other god:** It was not that there were other gods besides the one true and living God. It was that men create a god after their own image in order to justify their misguided religious beliefs and practices. For this reason, Israel was to destroy every image and idol that portrayed the false imaginations of the Canaanites. **Break their images ... cut down their groves:** The images, or pillars, and the groves, the Asherim, were objects of worship of both male and female gods. Immoral behavior was often practiced in conjunction with the hedonistic behavior that eventually led to the sacrifices of children to these pagan gods. Because Israel failed to destroy this culture in the land of Canaan by completely destroying the Canaanites, the beliefs and practices of these pagan religions eventually infected Israel. As a result, the Israelites were exiled from the land into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. It is here, therefore, that God warns them

about making any covenant with the people of the land lest they be tempted to intermarry and adopt the gods of the land. **Prostitute themselves after their gods:** When one marries one of another belief, he or she will often adopt the beliefs of his or her mate. If a believer marries a person who believes in another god, he or she will often become unfaithful to the true God of heaven. The principle that is being taught here is that the believer must be taught to maintain his or her faith by marrying one of the same faith.

34:17-26 The sin is not in the making of the idol, but in the belief that motivates one to make the idol. God is here strict. Not only were they to refrain from imagining other gods, they were not to make any image that would bring their imagination into the formation of something that is physical (See 12:14-20; 13:3-13; 23:15). **Plowing time and harvest:** They were to resist the temptation of violating the Sabbath by plowing when it rained, or harvesting when the crop was ready on a Sabbath. Their desire to think of the things of this world must not move them to violate the principle of the Sabbath. **Feasts:** See 23:16,17. **Feast of the Passover:** See 23:18,19.

34:27,28 The writing of the words was the renewal of the covenant that God had made with Israel. During the forty days that Moses was on the mountain, he wrote the remainder of the words of the covenant, though it was God who wrote the words of the ten commandments on the two stone tablets. **Forty:** God certainly gave Moses strength in his

fasting for these forty days since no man can go without water for such a period and live.

34:29-35: Because of this time with God on the mountain, the countenance of Moses glowed. While he spoke with the people, his face glowed. But after he spoke, he put a veil on his face. The glowing of Moses' face was a visual evidence to the people that He had been with God on the mountain (Compare Lk 9:29-31; At 6:15; 2 Co 3:7-18).

Chapter 35 CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE

35:1-3 This begins Moses' instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle. In their zeal to build, he first reminds them that they should not forget to honor the Sabbath. The building was not to take place on any Sabbath.

35:4-29 *Willing ... offering:* In order to procure materials for the building of the tabernacle, Moses asked for a free-will offering from the people. That which they were commanded to do had to come from a free-will offering, otherwise the providing of the material would not have been a sacrifice. If one is paid for that which he must give as a free-will offering, then he has no fruit from the sacrifice. As a result of the request, the people willingly gave. The people were stirred into action by the opportunity to give freely for that which God had commanded.

35:30-35 *Bezaleel:* This man was inspired by God to know how to accomplish the task of building the tabernacle.

Aholiab was also filled with wisdom and the skill of an artisan. Since these two men were given the skills to construct the tabernacle, then we must assume that they were to teach others how to perform the tasks since they could not do all the work themselves.

Chapter 36

36:1-7 All the materials for the building of the tabernacle were committed to Bezaleel and Aholiab. When the people brought more than what was needed to build the tabernacle, Moses had to command the people to stop giving. The generosity of their heart was magnified in the fact that he had to command them to stop giving (See 2 Co 9:7). Their giving did not depend on their assembly together to act as one. They came individually because of their commitment to accomplish the will of God.

36:8-38 Israel obeyed all instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle. Their obedience was manifested in the fact that they desired to follow every detail. To the reader, the exactness of what is described in this section should remind us that when God commands something to be done, He often explains how it is to be done. In this case, the command was to build the tabernacle. But in the command, some of the specifics of how it was to be constructed were also given. The fact that Israel obeyed according to the pattern that God had given reveals that at this time in the history of Israel, they were zealous to follow the instructions of God. For this reason these intricate details are recorded

in Scripture in order to give the posterity of Israel an example of how their fathers learned obedience.

Chapter 37

37:1-29 The mention that Bezaleel as the master artisan who built the ark is made here to identify that God, who inspired Bezaleel (36:1) in all necessary skills, was the One who actually built the tabernacle. The inspired writer wants us to know that the work was of God. We thus conclude that through Bezaleel God built the tabernacle and its furnishings, which furnishings included the ark, the most precious piece of furniture of the tabernacle. The detail by which it was constructed manifested the obedience of those who took the raw materials and formed them into the tabernacle and its furnishings. The tabernacle was truly a magnificent structure that testified to the willingness of the builders to do all things according to the will of God.

Chapter 38

38:1-31 *Inventory of the tabernacle:* It is difficult to determine the amount of weight in gold, silver and bronze that was used to make the tabernacle. It is estimated that the weight in bronze alone was as much as three tons. When counted together, the weight of all metals that went into the construction measured in the tons, indicating the generosity of the nation in order to bring to Moses all that was necessary for the completion of the tabernacle. The origin of these metals was Egypt. When Israel departed from Egypt the Israelites

plundered the Egyptians of much of their wealth. Since the Israelites freely received much of these precious metals from the Egyptians, they in turn freely gave the same to Moses for the construction of the tabernacle. And since God provided daily for them with the manna and quail, then there would have been little use for the possessions of gold and silver among the people. It is interesting to see the collective thinking of Israel at this time. All the precious metals that they would have considered to be their own individually, they were willing to give to the collective possession of the entire nation. The owner of the tabernacle was the nation of Israel. The contribution of the precious metals, therefore, went from individual ownership to collective ownership in the tabernacle. Their desire to freely transfer ownership from individuals to national interests manifested their desire to be one as a nation. When individuals give to a collective effort, they manifest their desire to be one (See 2 Co 8:4). *Serving women:* The one statement in verse 8 is significant in the fact that the mirrors of women who served were also contributed. These mirrors were made of polished bronze, a common article of women from ancient times in Egypt. The women's sacrifice of these mirrors truly manifested their desire to serve the Lord instead of looking at themselves in mirrors. It seems that in verse 8 the women "who assembled at the door" organized themselves together to serve. The phrase "assembled at the door" literally means that they came by groups, thus indicat-

ing their organization among themselves to serve.

Chapter 39

39:1-43 *The Lord commanded*

Moses: This statement is made six times throughout the narrative concerning the making of the garments for the priests (vss 1,5,7,21,26,31). The statement emphasizes again the generic and specific manner by which the command of God was given to carry out both the construction of the tabernacle and the making of the clothing for the priests. The generic command was to construct the tabernacle and make the garments for the priests. The specifics of the command were that God also prescribed how the tabernacle and garments were to be made. The reason for the specifics was to test the explicit obedience of the Israelites in their obedience to every command of God. **Brought to Moses:** It took six months to complete the tabernacle. Once completed, everything was brought to Moses for his inspection, since he only had seen the pattern that was given by God. Once inspected, Moses reassured them that they had completed everything according to the pattern that God had showed him in the mountain (vs 43). One purpose for the detailed instructions of the construction was to determine their desire to be obedient to God according to His word. Once the construction was finished, Moses' reassurance of their work manifested God's approval of those who sought to work according to His instructions. Their obedience was opposite to the spirit of idolatry. The Israelites had

come out of a culture that created every type of god after the imagination of men who sought to do their own will in religious matters. Israel was tested in her construction of the tabernacle according to the pattern that God had shown Moses in the mountain. She was tested to see if she had given up the spirit of idolatry, that is, construction of religions after her own desires as in the construction of the golden calf. When God approved the work of the Israelites in constructing the tabernacle, His approval was a witness to the fact that Israel had learned her lesson not to construct religion and religious articles after their own desires. Israel was now ready to be the nation of God.

Chapter 40

DEDICATION

OF THE TABERNACLE

40:1-33 The setting up of the tabernacle came exactly two years after their departure from Egypt. **Anoint the tabernacle:** The tabernacle was first erected. Using a special anointing oil, Moses anointed the tabernacle in order to designate it to be holy. Once set apart (sanctified), it was not to be touched by anyone other than the designated priests whose job it was to transport the tabernacle from one place to another (See Lv 8:1-13). **Everlasting priesthood:** The word "everlasting" in reference to the priesthood of Aaron and his sons is significant. Herein is a definition of how the word "everlasting" ("eternal") is often used in Scripture. Jesus is the only everlasting high priest (See Hb 7:17,23-25,28). The priesthood of Aaron and his

sons ended in Christ. Therefore, his priesthood was “everlasting” until the coming of Christ. The word “everlasting” as an adjective means to exist throughout an intended time of duration. In the statement that Aaron’s priesthood was everlasting, God was simply stating that it would not go out of existence until He took it out of existence. When Jesus came, God terminated the existence of the priesthood of Aaron. ***A cloud covered the tent:*** Once the tabernacle was erected, God visibly manifested His approval of what the workmen had done in fulfilling all His commandments concerning the construction. The cloud thus became a permanent feature of the tabernacle. When the cloud moved, the tabernacle was to be moved. When it stood still in one place, the tabernacle was to remain in that place. ***Throughout all their journeys:*** The presence of the cloud by day and the fire by night was a manifestation that God was continually with Israel. Israel had repented of her sin, and thus the coming of the cloud and fire was a continual reminder that God had forgiven their sin, and subsequently would be with them throughout their journeys. Israel was now ready to leave Mt. Sinai and enter the land of promise. Unfortunately, because of their doubt, this would not happen until 38 years after the completion of the tabernacle.

There are several misunderstandings concerning the purpose of the tabernacle that must be rehearsed before the Bible interpreter leaves Exodus. These misunderstandings often come as a result of not understanding the purpose of the tabernacle.

1. The tabernacle was constructed for portability. It was not a structure that was to focus Israel’s faith permanently to one location as with the building of the temple.

2. The tabernacle was to be moved throughout the tribal possessions in the land of Palestine. Because of the great detail concerning the movement of the tabernacle, God was saying that it be made available to all the tribes of Israel. The reason for the mobility of the tabernacle was that it not be “to far” from any tribe all the time. The “too far law” that was given in reference to the offerings assumed that no one tribe would be continually too far from the tabernacle in order to offer burnt offerings. For example, if during one year the tabernacle was located in the southern part of the land, instructions were given in order that those tribes that were too far away could make their offerings where they were. They were “too far” from the tabernacle, and thus God established the “too far law” in order to accommodate them. But we must keep in mind that no tribe was ever to be consigned to keep the “too far law” throughout the history of Israel in Palestine. The “too far law” was given only to accomodate temporarily those who were occasionally too far away from the tabernacle.

3. The tabernacle was not to be set up in a permanent location. The “too far law” assumed that the tabernacle was to be continually moved on an annual basis in order that no tribe be continually too far from its presence. God did not want the Israelites to establish a central loca-

tion of worship, which thing they eventually did in their history. The religions of the world in which Israel existed established central places of worship, which eventually led to the building of pagan temples for local gods. In order to prevent Israel from doing this in reference to the presence of God among them, He originally intended that the tabernacle be moved from one place to another (See comments Jn 4:20-24).

4. The movement of the tabernacle among the possessions of Israel promoted unity. No one tribe became the sole custodian of the tabernacle. No one tribe could claim ownership of the tabernacle. What eventually happened in the history of Israel was the opposite of what God originally intended. This is brought out in the division of Israel into two kingdoms during the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam assumed kingship over the two southern tribes, whereupon they claimed the temple that was constructed by Solomon in their territory. Jeroboam claimed the northern ten tribes that were consigned to keep the “too far law” because the temple was built in Jerusalem. What Jeroboam did was to accommodate what the people had to do in reference to the annual sacrifices. Since they were consigned to always be too far from the temple, he built altars in Dan and Bethel in order that the people, who were already keeping the “too far law,” stay in their northern possessions (1 Kg 12:25-33). If Israel had obeyed God’s original intent by keeping the tabernacle mobile, there would have never been a need for Jeroboam to build these

two altars in order to accommodate those who were consigned to keep continually the “too-far law.”

5. The tabernacle was not a blueprint for the temple. The laws concerning the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus and Leviticus are very detailed. This detail was not given for the purpose of making the tabernacle a building plan (blueprint) for the construction of the temple that was built 480 years later. Keep in mind that after giving the law at Mt. Sinai, including the instructions and building of the tabernacle, God commanded Israel to go up immediately and take the land. If they had obeyed God to take the land immediately, then the tabernacle would have been with them from the time they left Mt. Sinai. God did not intend that it remain with them for a brief time after they arrived in Palestine. God gave detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle so they would be able to refurbish or reconstruct the tabernacle throughout their history.

6. The tabernacle represented the presence of God among His people. In Revelation 21:3 the tabernacle was used metaphorically to refer to this principle. The Holy Spirit did not refer to the temple, but to the tabernacle as a symbol of the presence of God among His people. The temple was never in the original plan of God. It was built only to accommodate the desires of David and Solomon. God accommodated the construction of the temple as He accommodated Israel’s desire to have a king over them as the nations around them. With the temple, the desire was the same. Israel wanted a

temple for their God as the nations around them had temples for their gods. God's original plan was never to have a permanent location that represented His presence. Unfortunately, when a concession was made that was contrary to the original plan of God, there would be con-

sequences to suffer. In reference to the temple, the consequence was the centralization of Israel's faith in a particular location, and the people's ignoring the work of the priests of God throughout the land.