

Revision 1.0

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This book is a chapter-by-chapter but not necessarily paragraph by paragraph paraphrase of the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The language was simplified and in this case the volume was reduced by about 50%.

The history covered by this book begins with the creation of the world and tackles the question of why sin exists. It ends together with the reign of king David and sets up for the next book which begins with the reign of his son Solomon.

A free pdf of the original book can be obtained here:

[https://media4.egwwritings.org/pdf/en\\_PP.pdf](https://media4.egwwritings.org/pdf/en_PP.pdf)

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## *Chapter 1—Why was Sin Permitted?*

[1 John 4:16](#) We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. [1 John 4:16 NLT](#). God is love and He never changes, so how can suffering and evil exist under His rule? Understanding the great conflict between good and evil, from its start to its final end, can help one to see the never-ending love of God.

The God of the universe is not a single being. [John 1:1](#) In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He existed in the beginning with God. [John 1:1-2 NLT](#). Jesus is the Word that John is writing about, and the Word and God both share the same nature, character, and purpose. Through the Spirit of inspiration, Jesus spoke these words about His everlasting nature: [Proverbs 8:22](#) "The LORD formed me from the beginning, before he created anything else. <sup>23</sup> I was appointed in ages past, at the very first, before the earth began. <sup>24</sup> I was born before the oceans were created, before the springs bubbled forth their waters. <sup>25</sup> Before the mountains were formed, before the hills, I was born – <sup>26</sup> before he had made the earth and fields and the first handfuls of soil. <sup>27</sup> I was there when he established the heavens, when he drew the horizon on the oceans. <sup>28</sup> I was there when he set the clouds above, when he established springs deep in the earth. <sup>29</sup> I was there when he set the limits of the seas, so they would not spread beyond their boundaries. And when he marked off the earth's foundations, <sup>30</sup> I was the architect at his side. I was his constant delight, rejoicing always in his presence. [Proverbs 8:22-30 NLT](#).

Many times, in His life on earth, Jesus was called the Son of God. It was through Jesus, the Word, or the Son of God, before He became a human being that all things were created. [Colossians 1:16](#) for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see--such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. [Colossians 1:16 NLT](#). [Psalm 148:1](#) Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens! Praise him from the skies! <sup>2</sup> Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all the armies of heaven! <sup>3</sup> Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you twinkling stars! <sup>4</sup> Praise him, skies above! Praise him, vapors high above the clouds! <sup>5</sup> Let every created thing give praise to the LORD, for he issued his command, and they came into being. [Psalm 148:1-5 NLT](#).

Love is the foundation of God's government, and keeping His law is the only way to happiness for His creation. God doesn't want forced loyalty, and gives free will, so that seeing His goodness and love, intelligent beings will choose to serve Him. When this was the case, there was perfect harmony throughout God's creation.

Heavenly beings delighted in serving, and loving God, and carrying out His commands.

But there was one, the highest in power and authority in heaven next to Christ, who began to doubt the goodness of God's love and law. He was Lucifer, "son of the morning," chief among the angels, who first sinned. [Ezekiel 28:12](#) ... "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty. <sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone--red carnelian, pale-green peridot, white moonstone, blue-green beryl, onyx, green jasper, blue lapis lazuli, turquoise, and emerald--all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created. <sup>14</sup> I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire. <sup>15</sup> "You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you. [Ezekiel 28:12-15 NLT](#).

Even though he was already chief among the angels, Lucifer began to want more. [Ezekiel 28:17](#) Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted by your love of splendor. So I threw you to the ground and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings. [Ezekiel 28:17 NLT](#). [Isaiah 14:13](#) For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. <sup>14</sup> I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.' [Isaiah 14:13-14 NLT](#). Lucifer began to doubt the motives of God and coveted the position of his own creator.

The perfect harmony in heaven had been broken. Lucifer claimed to be working for the good of all created beings, by wishing for them, freedom from having to keep God's law. He used the master mind that his creator had given him to manipulate, deceive, and justify his rebellion. Some of the angels pleaded with him to stop what he was doing. The Son of God tried to explain the unchanging nature of the law, and that he was bringing ruin on himself. But Lucifer only became more determined.

The King of the universe could not let this confusion and uncertainty continue in heaven and gathered everyone to a meeting. God the Father clearly explained the position of the Son in relation to all created beings. It was also explained that the Son of God shared the Father's throne and Glory. To the "10,000 x 10,000, and thousands of thousands," [[Revelation 5:11](#)] of angels gathered around the throne, the King proclaimed that none but Christ could participate in the inner councils with Him. He also said that the Son of God was the One who had carried out Their plans in the creation of all the heavenly beings, and their obedience and loyalty to Him should be given to Christ as well.

The angels responded to the announcement of the King by bowing down before Christ and acknowledging Him as God. Even Lucifer bowed with them but there was a conflict brewing in his mind. As the angels sang songs of praise to both the Father and the Son, the heart of Lucifer felt the thrill of being in harmony with all the sinless angels in heaven. But in the conflict he was experiencing, pride and jealousy won out. His envy of Christ again surfaced, and his desire to be equal with God returned. In his appointed position, he was beloved and honored by the angels in heaven, who delighted in carrying out his commands. He had been created with wisdom and glory above all other angels, but it irritated him that the Son of God was above him and was one in power and authority with the Father.

After Lucifer left this meeting, he began to meet secretly with angels, as if he was working on some special project for heaven's improvement, but the result was that angels were left with questions and unhappiness. He suggested that God's law might be necessary for the created worlds, but angels were superior and holier beings and didn't need laws. He told them they were no more capable of making wrong decisions than God Himself. Then he slipped in the claim that since he was also honored and revered by the angels, it was unfair of the Father to treat the Son as an equal, but not him. He claimed that if he was given his rightful position of authority, all angels would have more freedom. In fact, he hinted that changes were coming that might restrict their freedom even more.

Lucifer was able to take advantage of the trust and loyalty the angels willingly gave him. As he has always done so skillfully since that time, he was a master at hiding his purposes. He would lead the angels to believe he was doing one thing, when in reality it was the opposite. He claimed to be trying to promote peace, harmony and loyalty in heaven, but the result was conflict, disagreement and rebellion. Some of the angels agreed with Lucifer, and soon found themselves unhappy, and were willing to support their commander in his demand for equality with the Son of God. But there were other angels who chose to remain faithful and even tried to win Lucifer and his supporters back into harmony with the will of God.

In great mercy, which is a part of His character, God was patient. Lucifer himself didn't even fully understand the end result of pursuing his feelings of unhappiness, because this had never happened in heaven before. Finally, God, in infinite love and wisdom, was able to convince Lucifer that he was in the wrong. [Psalm 145:17](#) The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness. [Psalm 145:17 NLT](#). If Lucifer had acknowledged this, he might have saved himself and the angels who supported him. At that time, he had abandoned his position as the covering cherub but had not yet rebelled against the Father. If he had repented, and submitted to the will of God, he could have been restored to his former position.

God would no longer allow this subtle spreading of discontent among the angels and required a decision from the unhappy angels. Lucifer nearly repented but because of his pride, he felt he could not admit he was wrong.

Now, even though God lovingly tried to win Lucifer and his supporters back from the edge of ruin that they were about to cross, this compassion was misinterpreted. Lucifer interpreted God's compassion as weakness and thought that God would eventually give in to his demands if they stood firm. He then did what he has taught many of his followers to do since that time, which was to mock those who opposed him, and call them names. Lucifer had reached the point of no return and was willing to take the honor that he claimed was his, and to set up a new and better government where all would have the freedom that he kept talking about. Many angels joined him, and he even entertained the thought that he might win all the angels to his side, making him equal with God.

Angels who remained loyal to God, continued to plead with Lucifer and his followers to turn back from the path they were following. They pointed out that God's law was as sacred as Himself, and that no angel could change it. They warned angels who had not yet openly sided with Lucifer, to not be tricked by his deceptive reasoning. Many of Lucifer's supporters began to see more clearly what he was up to and were willing to repent and ask for God's forgiveness and mercy. But Lucifer had another lie to discourage them from doing that. He told them that they had gone too far, and God would not forgive them. He said their only course of action now was to take what they wanted by force.

It was true that Satan had gone too far to repent, but that was not the case with the angels whom he had deceived. If they had chosen to do so, they could have listened to the warning and broken away from Lucifer's trap. But pride, loyalty to their leader, and their continuing desire for more freedom won, over God's love and mercy.

God intentionally allowed Lucifer to continue his work until it developed into a rebellion. Lucifer had hidden his true motives behind questions and suggestions about making heaven a better place. He was very skilled at combining truth and error and using logical reasoning to support his point. He was a master of lies and deception, all the while appearing mostly harmless. He accused angels who didn't side with him of not caring about the good of heaven. He was very good at accusing his opponents of the very things he himself was doing. On top of all that, Lucifer's position as the highest created being in heaven gave greater weight to his arguments. It was necessary for his plan to develop to the point where it could clearly be seen as rebellion. Before that, even the loyal angels couldn't really see where his actions were leading.

The government of God included not only the angels in heaven but also other worlds He had created. Lucifer thought that if he could win all the angels to his side, he could also get the beings from other worlds to support him as well. In this conflict God could use only what was consistent with His nature and His law, such as truth and righteousness. Lucifer could use all the tricks and techniques just mentioned, and on top of that he accused God of requiring obedience and submission for selfish reasons. God's response to the accusations of Lucifer is to prove to the angels and all other worlds that His government is fair, and His law is perfect. The first part of this would require the true nature of Lucifer to be clearly seen by the entire universe, and this would take time.

The trouble in heaven that was caused by Lucifer, he now blamed on God's government. God had allowed him to proceed for a time to show the true nature of his ideas. The fruit of Lucifer's ideas had ripened into rebellion and all the angels had chosen sides. But even after he was cast out of heaven, God's wisdom saw that Lucifer, who became known as Satan, should not be immediately destroyed. The reason being that God doesn't want His creatures to serve Him out of fear. He wants only to be served because of His love and justice. The beings from other worlds and even the angels had still not seen the true nature and the full consequences of sin. If Satan had been immediately destroyed, many would have chosen to serve God only out of fear. Even if he were gone, some of Satan's claims would still have remained unanswered in the eyes of the onlooking universe. For these reasons, sin must be allowed to run its course so that all created beings could see beyond any doubt that God is just and merciful and His law is unchangeable.

## *Chapter 2—The Creation*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 1-2](#).

[Psalm 33:6](#) The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. <sup>7</sup> He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. [Psalm 33:6-7 NLT](#). [Psalm 104:5](#) You placed the world on its foundation so it would never be moved. [Psalm 104:5 NLT](#).

The world created by God was extremely beautiful. It was covered by mountains, rolling hills, and flat plains, decorated with rivers and lakes. The steep, jagged, and rocky cliffs we have today did not exist, because they were buried by rich soil covered with flowering plants and trees, and there were no swamps or deserts. The trees were more majestic than anything that exist today, and the air was pure and clean. After the landscape, living creatures were added, in the sky, waters, and finally on the land. Even the angels were delighted with the beautiful and creative work of God.

The crowning work of creation was Adam and Eve, made in God's image, to be in charge of the earth and take care of it. [Genesis 1:26](#) Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. [Genesis 1:26-27 NLT](#).

The Bible simply and clearly tells us how we came to exist on this earth. Human beings did not develop slowly from lower forms of animal or plant life. When people try to remove God from the picture, they degrade humanity from being children created in the image of the King of the Universe, to being descendants of germs, and lower forms of life.

The animals God created do not have the ability to understand and know about God, but they could develop loving relationships with and serve man. [Psalm 8:6](#) You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority – <sup>7</sup> the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, <sup>8</sup> the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. [Psalm 8:6-8 NLT](#).

One of the first things Adam did was to give names to all the creatures. As he did so, he noticed that each animal had a companion, but none was found for him. [\[Genesis 2:19-20\]](#). [Genesis 2:18](#) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." [Genesis 2:18 NLT](#). So, God performed the first surgery, by putting Adam to sleep, and removing one of

his ribs. Eve was then created from the rib taken from Adam's side, signifying that she was made to stand at his side, as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. She was literally made from a part of man, which showed the close connection and love that should exist between them. [Ephesians 5:29](#) No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. [Ephesians 5:29 NLT](#). [Genesis 2:24](#) This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. [Genesis 2:24 NLT](#). God gave our first parents the gift of marriage, which continued even after sin. When God's plan for marriage is followed, it is beneficial, providing purity, happiness, companionship, and even elevates the physical, intellectual and moral nature of human beings.

Adam was a little taller than Eve, and both were much taller than people today. They glowed with health and vitality, and they were perfectly formed and beautiful. They didn't need to wear clothes because their bodies were covered with a glorious light, like angels.

As another sign of His love for Adam and Eve, God gave them a beautiful garden in Eden. Everything was perfect and nothing was missing that could add to their happiness. In the garden were beautiful trees with delicious fruit, and food bearing vines that Adam could train to form rooms or a home for themselves. There were colorful and beautiful flowers everywhere, but in the middle of the garden was a special tree. This tree was more majestic than all the other trees in the garden, and its fruit had the power to keep them living forever.

[Genesis 1:31](#) Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day. [Genesis 1:31 NLT](#). [Genesis 2:1](#) So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. [Genesis 2:1-3 NLT](#).

Each week on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, we should rest and think about the amazing work of creation. In doing so, we should see evidence of the goodness and wisdom of God and should be filled with love and reverence for Him. [Psalm 19:1](#) ... The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. [Psalm 19:1-2 NLT](#). The Sabbath rest was established, and given to us from the beginning, before the Israelites received the 10 Commandments on the tables of stone, thus it belongs to all people. In fact, God even saw the need for the Sabbath before there was sin.

Our first parents were made perfect and innocent, having the ability to talk to holy angels, and even to God Himself. But they were given the freedom to choose

whether they would love, believe, and obey God, or not. Since Adam and Eve were not created with the ability to originate sin, like Satan, a test was needed to allow them to choose. They were told they could eat the fruit of any other tree in the garden, but they must not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which stood near the tree of life in the center of the garden. [Genesis 2:17](#) ... If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." [Genesis 2:17 NLT](#). This tree was the only place they would be exposed to Satan's temptations, and if they passed the test, it would be removed, and they would forever be safe from sinning.

No government can exist without laws and God's government is no exception. True freedom does not exist if one does not have the choice to disobey the law. A creature created to only obey the laws programmed into it would be like a robot. Without freedom to choose, obedience would be forced, and there could be no development of character. If humanity had no choice but to serve and obey God, one of Satan's accusations about God's government would have been true.

God made Adam and Eve perfect, with no tendency toward evil. He gave them intelligence, and with that, the incentive of eternal happiness if they obeyed. The alternative was disobedience, which would result in them losing access to the tree of life, followed by death.

The natural simplicity of our first parent's home was to be a model for their children. It was not a palace, decorated at great expense by man made things. The blue sky, flowers, green grass and leafy trees were its walls, floor and decoration. Pride and ambition are never satisfied, but true happiness can be found by spending time with God in nature.

God gave Adam and Eve the job of caring for the garden of Eden. [Genesis 2:15](#) The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. [Genesis 2:15 NLT](#). Even though it was a job that was assigned to him, it was enjoyable. God knew that humans needed something to do, to focus their mind, and exercise their bodies. After sin, when work was harder and it became much more difficult to produce and find food, even then labor was a blessing. Needing to spend a lot of time and effort to survive is a safeguard against temptation. Those who think manual labor is a curse are wrong and are completely out of touch with God's intention when He created us.

As long as they obeyed God, Adam and Eve had complete control over every living thing on earth. [Genesis 1:26](#) ... They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." [Genesis 1:26 NLT](#). They were in no danger from animals that were bigger and stronger than them, and they could enjoy the presence of smaller animals without scaring them away. Adam and Eve had much to learn,

and their teachers were holy angels and the Creator Himself. They were invigorated by the tree of life, but angels were still a little bit superior to them. They would never finish learning about the mysteries of the universe, and the laws of nature. [Job 37:16](#) Do you understand how he moves the clouds with wonderful perfection and skill? [Job 37:16 NLT](#).

Somehow Adam and Eve had the ability to learn from leaves, flowers and trees, their secrets of life. Adam had named each creature and was familiar with every single one of them. The mysteries of light and sound, and what caused day and night, were all things that our first parents could learn. The perfect order and harmony they saw in nature, showed that God who created them had infinite wisdom and power. Each new discovery they made filled them with more love and gratitude for their maker. And if they would continue to be obedient to God's law, their knowledge, enjoyment, and love would continue increasing forever. This continual growth also included finding newer and clearer ways to understand the infinite love of God.

## *Chapter 3—The Temptation and Fall*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 3](#).

After Satan could no longer cause trouble in heaven, he found a target in our newly created world, and our first parents. He hated seeing their love and happiness and was determined to cause them to lose it. This he could do by getting them to disobey God, and as a result, bring upon themselves the consequences of sin. In this way, he knew that he could also hurt God and cause sadness in heaven.

Adam and Eve were not without warning. They had been taught about Satan's rebellion and fall and his desire to win them to his side. It was disobedience to God's law that caused Satan's fall, and now he intended to get Adam and Eve to distrust and disobey God as well.

God's law reveals His will, His character, His love, and His wisdom. The harmony of God's creation depends on everyone and everything following laws. The natural laws that scientists have discovered regarding, mass, light, sound, and gravity are a few of God's laws that govern nature. Human beings are governed by natural laws as well, and in addition have the benefit of God's moral law.

Our first parents were given a period of time when they could choose whether they would believe God and live or believe Satan and die. Satan was not allowed to follow them everywhere, tempting them continually. His only access to them was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If they rejected Satan's temptations during this period, they would then be safe forever as the holy angels were. But if they yielded to temptation, their perfect nature would be replaced by a sinful one, and they would naturally desire to break God's law.

Satan did what he always does which is to lie and deceive. In this case he used the serpent, which originally was one of the most wise and beautiful creatures, which at the time even had wings to fly. Angels had warned the couple to stay together so that they could support each other if they were tempted. One day, without doing it on purpose, Eve wandered away on her own. When she realized it, at first, she remembered the warning and, and thought of the danger she could be in. But then thought that she was smart enough to not be tricked into disobeying God. Before long, Eve found herself at the forbidden tree and began to wonder why God had kept it from them. Suddenly Eve was surprised to hear a voice speaking to her, as if it were an echo of her thoughts.

If Eve had encountered an angelic being, she would have been on high alert, but she was curious about how a serpent was talking, and she was not afraid. The serpent said, "Did God really say you couldn't eat the fruit of every tree in the

garden?" Eve responded, "No, we can eat the fruit from every tree in the garden except for this one, and if we eat or even touch this fruit we will die." The serpent then said, "You won't really die. God just doesn't want you to eat this fruit because he knows if you eat it, you will become like a god, knowing about good and evil." Satan led Eve to believe that God was keeping her from eating the fruit because it would elevate her to being equal to Him. As proof, the serpent said, "Look, I ate the fruit and am not dead, and in addition to that I can now talk."

Satan may have different approaches for each person, and for different generations, but the underlying message is that God's law is keeping you back from happiness and reaching a higher level of existence. Of course, he hides the fact that because of his disobedience, he is an outcast from heaven.

Eve believed the serpent instead of God, and this led to her fall. In the judgment we will not be condemned for honestly believing a lie, but for not believing the truth. It is our responsibility to learn what truth is, and that is why God has given us His word, the Bible.

The serpent gave some of the forbidden fruit to Eve, and after touching it and not immediately dying, she became bolder and ate it. As she ate it, she thought it tasted great, and she felt something changing in her body. She imagined that she was feeling her body enter a higher state of existence. So, she picked and ate more and then helped Satan to bring sin to her husband as well.

When Adam saw his wife carrying the forbidden fruit toward him, he was sad and afraid. Eve told him what had happened, and Adam said that this must be the enemy of God that they had been warned about, and now she would die. But she argued, using the words of the serpent, that he wouldn't die. She continued, reasoning that God's warning to them must not have been true, because instead of dying, she had different sensations running through her body which must be the higher state of existence the serpent talked about.

But Adam was not deceived and knew that Eve had broken the one and only rule God had given them. He regretted letting Eve wander from his side and now thought about life without her. For Adam, his love for Eve outweighed his love for God. He didn't stop to think that God in His infinite power could somehow satisfy the desire in his heart for her. He made the decision that if she had to die, he would die with her. And, in the off chance that the serpent was right, they would still be together in a higher state of existence. After all, Eve was still alive and as beautiful as ever.

After eating the fruit, Adam also imagined himself entering a higher state of existence, but soon the thought of his action filled him with terror. They began to feel a chill, and then noticed that they were naked, and for the first time felt a need

to cover up. Now they felt ashamed and embarrassed and tried to cover their nakedness before seeing God or the angels.

Satan was thrilled with his success. He had succeeded in getting the woman to disbelieve God, and through her had caused Adam's fall.

Before their disobedience, Adam and Eve used to welcome visits from their Creator, but now as they sensed His approach, they tried to hide from Him. So, God called out to Adam saying, "Where are you?" When Adam and Eve stood in front of their maker, they explained, "We heard You call, but we were afraid because we are naked, so we hid." God said, "Who told you that you are naked? Did you eat the fruit from the tree I told you not to eat?"

When Adam was confronted with his sin, he didn't repent or show remorse, but he tried to blame God by saying: "The woman You made for me, gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it." Because of his love for Eve, he was willing to join her in death, but now in his sinful state, he blamed her and even God for his disobedience. Then God asked Eve what she had to say, and she said: "The serpent You made tricked me into eating the fruit." Both Adam and Eve blamed God for their disobedience. Giving excuses for bad choices originated with Satan, and now this trait was inherited by Adam and Eve and all their future descendants.

For his part in the deception, God said to the serpent: "You are cursed above all animals. You will no longer be the most beautiful and admired creature, and you will slither around on the ground. Both humans and animals will hate and fear you." The next words of God applied to Satan as well: "I will put hatred between you and the woman, and between her descendants and yours. Her descendant will bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel."

To Eve, God said: "You will experience great pain when giving birth to children, and you must submit to your husband." In God's original plan, Adam and Eve were equals, but in their sinful state, harmony in the marriage could only be maintained by one submitting to the other. The roles given to fallen man could have worked for their mutual good, but men abused the supremacy they had, and most women have suffered greatly as a result.

Eve wished to enter a higher level of existence but instead fell far below it. In the same way, many modern women love the idea of rising above the role God assigned to them but will also be disappointed. In trying to reach these positions, many are leaving the work God gave them undone.

To Adam, God said: "The ground is now cursed, and only by hard work and sweat, will you be able to produce food to eat. Weeds and thorny plants will grow easily and choke out the vegetables and other plants you are trying to grow for food. You

will have to work hard your entire life just to survive, then you will die, and your body will decompose into dirt."

Obviously, this was not God's plan for humanity. Now they would not only know about evil but would experience it all the days of their lives. Now instead of Satan only being able to approach them at one tree, he had full access to tempt them anywhere. Now in addition to their lives and bodies, even the plants and the earth changed. Their rebellion against God was now inherited also by the animals who would rebel against them and against God's law of love. But even though the harm was done, there were still benefits to keeping God's law, even in a sinful world.

The hard work assigned to our first parents was a curse, but at the same time it was a blessing. A life of ease and lots of free time, combined with a sinful nature, would have been a worse curse on humanity. The hard work, combined with God's law would teach them the benefits of struggling against their nature, to develop good habits and self-control.

Two unrelated things happened Adam and Eve when they sinned. The first, the tendency to evil, and the effects on all nature, has already been discussed in the previous paragraphs. The second was that they lost the privilege of eating the fruit from the tree of life, which could have kept even their sinful bodies alive forever. Without access to the tree of life, their bodies would naturally break down until death occurred. [Genesis 3:24](#) After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. [Genesis 3:24 NLT](#).

Many people think that all the evil in this world is too great of a consequence for the one little mistake made by Adam and Eve. They say God is not wise or fair in his dealings with humanity. But if Adam could not bear such a small and simple test, how could he possibly be trusted with much greater responsibilities. If the test Adam had failed was much greater, the same doubters might have excused their minor sins saying it is so trivial. But any sin, whether big or small, is breaking God's law.

Many teach that keeping the law of God is no longer required today, and that it is not even possible to be completely obedient to its requirements. But if it were not possible to keep the law, why was Adam punished for breaking it? The Bible is clear about the consequences of Sin: [Romans 6:23](#) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 6:23 NLT](#). But it is also just as clear about the goodness and mercy of God, which should bring hope to all of us.

After their sin, Adam and Eve begged to remain in Eden and said they would never again eat from the forbidden tree. But God told them that their nature had been

corrupted by sin, and as a result, it would be harder for them to resist evil. On top of that, Satan would now have access to tempt them anywhere and anytime.

Without the covering and protection of the garment of light, God showed them how they could cover themselves with the skin of an animal. They wept over the death of the animal, and even the decay in the plant world, was a constant reminder of the consequences of their sin.

The garden of Eden was left on earth long after sin, but powerful angels prevented anyone from entering it. Adam and his children came and worshiped God in view of the garden that had once been theirs. The garden remained until the earth was destroyed by a flood because of the great wickedness of the people. But when sin is finally destroyed, we are promised that God will create a new heaven and earth. [Revelation 21:1](#) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. [Revelation 21:1 NLT](#).

One day, those who choose to keep God's commandments will live on that new earth and will be able to eat the fruit from the tree of life. From that day forward, people from other sinless worlds will be able to see what God intended on our world before it was cursed by sin, when the beauty of Eden will cover the whole earth.

## *Chapter 4—The Plan of Redemption*

When Adam and Eve sinned, all of heaven was filled with sadness, because the beautiful world and the people God had created would now experience misery and death. But the compassionate heart of God took pity on the lost world and put a plan into action to save humanity. God's law was as unchangeable as Himself, and the consequence of breaking the law is death, but the law allowed God to take upon Himself the consequence of sin, and to remove the guilt of the repentant sinner. The Son of God was the only one, that could bring humanity back into harmony with the law, but only by taking upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin. Since sin cannot exist in the presence of God, so when Christ in human form took the guilt of sin on Himself, it caused a separation between the Father and Son.

The following verse in Revelation seems to indicate that the plan of redemption existed before the creation of our world. [Revelation 13:8](#) ... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. [Revelation 13:8 NKJV](#). [John 3:16](#) "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16 NLT](#). After having paid the price for our sin, the Son of God, already king, would add the role of priest [[Zechariah 6:13](#)]. Even when we get immortal bodies and minds, and have lived for countless ages in heaven, we will still not be able to fully comprehend the love of God and His sacrifice for us.

In our sinful state, we cannot be in harmony with God, but His power has been made available to us so that we can overcome sin and become "children of God." [[1 John 3:2](#)] [2 Corinthians 5:19](#) For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. [2 Corinthians 5:19 NLT](#).

The angels were struck with grief when they heard the plan to save our world. Their beloved Commander must leave the perfection of heaven, and become a human on earth, experiencing poverty, hardship, sadness, shame, and death. [Hebrews 2:18](#) Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. [Hebrews 2:18 NLT](#). When He finished teaching His followers on earth what they would need to know to carry on after He was gone, He would be arrested and then horribly treated to every insult and torture Satan could imagine. He would die the cruelest, and most painful, and shameful death imagined by evil men, and would suffer in such agony that angels could not bear to watch. He would experience the anguish of being separated from the Father because of the guilt of the sins of the world He was carrying.

When the angels heard all of this, they begged to go in place of their beloved Commander, but the life of an angel could not pay the price of the sins of the world. Only the Creator of humanity could redeem them from sin and death. Being made human, He would be lower than the angels, but they would be able to encourage, strengthen, and protect Him. [Hebrews 2:9](#) What we do see is Jesus, who was given a position "a little lower than the angels" ... [Hebrews 2:9 NLT](#). About angels, Paul wrote: [Hebrews 1:14](#) Therefore, angels are only servants--spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation. [Hebrews 1:14 NLT](#). The angels were clearly instructed what they could and could not do, and since it was part of the plan of redemption, that Christ would suffer insults, abuse, and death from wicked men, angels could not protect Him from that.

When angels were assured that the death of Christ would save many from sin, and that it would also eventually end Satan's reign of terror, there was great rejoicing in heaven. That joy rang out on the hills of Bethlehem when the angels sang: [Luke 2:14](#) "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." [Luke 2:14 NLT](#).

Adam and Eve first learned of the plan of redemption when God said to them: [Genesis 3:15](#) And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." [Genesis 3:15 NLT](#). That promise was given to them even before they learned the detailed consequences of their sin. To Satan, this let him know that his power over human beings would have a limit, and that they would be able to choose to resist his temptations. Satan was also thrilled to learn that Christ would become a human and experience temptation on earth. He also realized that he could keep our race from being saved, and at the same time cause the permanent downfall of the Son of God, if he could get Him to sin when He was a man.

Adam and Eve were greatly saddened to learn that their sin would cause the suffering and death of their Creator. They earnestly pleaded that they should bear the consequences of their own sin. But they were told that since the law of God is unchangeable, the death of a person would only pay the consequences of their own sin. Even the sacrifice of a perfect and holy angel would not be acceptable as a substitute for others. Only the sacrifice of the Son of God could pay the price and allow man to go free. One sin by Adam brought suffering and death to the entire human race, and one sacrifice by Christ could bring forgiveness and life to all.

The sinful nature and the effects of sin would be inherited by all the descendants of Adam and Eve, and the dominion of the earth that had been given to Adam, was passed to Satan, essentially making him the "god of this world" [[2 Corinthians 4:4](#)]. Those who chose to serve Satan, were no better than his slaves. [2 Peter 2:19](#) They

promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you. [2 Peter 2:19 NLT](#). The sacrifice of Christ would take back the dominion Satan had taken from Adam. [John 12:31](#) The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." [John 12:31-32 NLT](#). [Psalm 37:29](#) The godly will possess the land and will live there forever. [Psalm 37:29 NLT](#). [Revelation 22:3](#) No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. [Revelation 22:3 NLT](#).

Even though sin completely separated humanity from the Father, angels and even Christ would be able to communicate with them. Important future events in the history of the world were revealed, like the flood, and the coming of the Savior. But the human race became more and more wicked, and as a result the curse of sin on the earth and even the animals would get worse. Mostly through the natural consequences of their own choices, the life span, physical size, endurance, intelligence, and even their ability to make good choices would all decrease. Indulgence of appetite and passion would make it impossible for people to understand spiritual truths. But there were always a few who remained faithful and obedient to God, and through those, the knowledge of Him was preserved and passed on.

God started the system of animal sacrifices to remind humanity of their sin, but also of the sacrifice God would make to save them. For Adam, the first one was especially difficult because he had never seen death before. An innocent animal losing its life because of his sin was to be a reminder to him that the innocent Son of God would sacrifice His life to save the human race from sin.

But the death of Christ would serve a bigger purpose. It would show to the universe that God was fair in how He handled Lucifer's rebellion, and it would show how unchangeable the law of God is. The fact that God wished to save humanity showed His love, and His willingness to sacrifice Himself showed that He couldn't simply change the law to do whatever He wanted.

When Satan succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to sin, he assumed the world would become his permanent kingdom, and that humanity could never be redeemed. But what he didn't know was that the law allowed for the sinner to be forgiven if God Himself was willing to suffer the consequence of that sin. The entire universe could not believe what they were seeing when Christ, the Creator of all things, left His glory in heaven and became a helpless baby. All watched closely as He lived His life on earth. They saw the sorrow, suffering, insults, and mockery, and knew that Satan was behind all of it. They saw it as a battle between

good and evil, and when on the cross Christ finally cried out "It is finished" [[John 19:30](#)], the onlooking universe and heaven itself echoed a shout of victory. The true character of Satan had been revealed, and all who were watching, now saw him as a liar and a murderer. The entire universe now saw the true nature of God and His law and were happy to continue serving Him out of love and not fear.

## *Chapter 5—Cain and Abel Tested*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 4:1-15](#)

Cain and Abel were the first two sons of Adam and Eve, and they were very different from each other. Abel loved and obeyed God and believed that He had been fair and merciful to the fallen race. Cain was rebellious and angry that everyone should suffer for his father's sin, so he questioned God's authority. Like their parents, the brothers were tested, to see if they would trust and obey God's command. They had been taught about how God would save humanity and knew that the system of sacrifices was symbolic of it. They knew that death, was the consequence of sin.

The two brothers set up similar altars as they had been taught. Abel brought an animal from his flock, and God accepted his offering by sending fire from heaven that burned it up. Since Cain was more into gardening, he ignored God's command and brought some of the produce from his garden to place on his altar. God did not accept Cain's offering.

Cain chose to bring the fruits of his own work to God, instead of showing his trust in the salvation God offered. He thought he could win God's favor by doing something for Him. Cain partially obeyed by making an altar and by bringing an offering, but he disobeyed in the part that symbolized his need for a Savior. Both brothers had been taught the same thing, and both showed that God had a right to worship, but the response of each was very different.

[Hebrews 11:4](#) It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. ... [Hebrews 11:4 NLT](#). Abel understood he was a sinner and realized his sinfulness separated him from God. He brought the animal, acknowledging the death required by law, which would ultimately be provided by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The two brothers represent people that have lived in all ages of the world. One which realizes their need for a savior, and the other which thinks they can save themselves. The latter represents every false religion and most people who have ever lived. Many of them claim humans don't need redemption, but development, refinement, and evolution to a higher state of existence. Those like Cain try to meet the divine standard on their own, but humanity does not naturally trend upward, but downward toward the satanic. [Acts 4:12](#) There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." [Acts 4:12 NLT](#).

Cain became angry when he saw that his offering was rejected, and Abel's was accepted. But God didn't just leave him to his own error without talking to him. He

was asked, "Why are you angry and why do you look so upset? If you follow the instructions you were given, your offering will be accepted, but if not, your sins will remain with you." But instead of acknowledging that he was wrong, Cain continued to complain about God, and he continued to be angry with his brother. In their arguments Abel defended God's justice, goodness, and mercy. Cain couldn't argue against his brother's logic and reasoning, and in a fit of rage he killed his brother. [1 John 3:12](#) We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. [1 John 3:12 NLT](#). It has been this way in all ages: [John 3:20](#) "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [John 3:20 NLT](#).

The murder of Abel by his wicked brother was the first incident showing the hatred that would exist between the seed of the woman and the serpent [[Genesis 3:15](#)]. The wicked who carry out these actions against the righteous are the seed of the serpent, but those who were killed in this way were the conquerors. [Revelation 12:11](#) And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. [Revelation 12:11 NLT](#).

God had still not cut off all communication with Cain and He asked him, "Where is your brother Abel?" God gave Cain an opportunity to confess his sin, but he answered, "I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?" Then the Lord said to Cain, "What did you do? Your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the ground. Now your punishment will be that the ground that received your brother's blood will not be fruitful for you anymore. And you will continually be on the move, running for your life."

Even though the law of God demanded Cain's life for the life he took, in mercy, God allowed him to live, giving him an opportunity to repent. But Cain continued to rebel against God and taught his descendants to do the same. The long lives of sinners before the flood resulted in greater and greater wickedness. This clearly demonstrated why sinful people could not have access to the tree of life. Finally, God in His mercy had to cut short both the length of lives and the run of wickedness that that was about to destroy the world.

Allowing sin to run its course was part of the plan of Redemption, and sinless worlds were watching and saw the result of Satan's way. [Genesis 6:5](#) ... everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. [Genesis 6:5 NLT](#). When judgment is finally carried out on Satan and sinners when the world is judged, everyone will say: [Revelation 15:3](#) ... Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. [Revelation 15:3 NLT](#).

## ***Chapter 6—Seth and Enoch***

This chapter is based on [Genesis 4:25 - 6:2](#).

After the death of Abel, another son inherited the promise and the spiritual birthright. Physically, Seth was more like Adam than both Cain and Abel, but like them and all humans he was born with a sinful nature. Seth chose to follow in the footsteps of Abel and worked as Abel would have to try to turn the hearts and minds of sinners to God.

When Seth was 105 years old, he had a son whom he named Enosh. The difference between the faithful heirs of the spiritual birthright, and the wicked began to grow. The former openly declared their loyalty to God, and the latter rejected and disobeyed God. Those who loved and worshipped God also kept the Sabbath because it was one of the commands given to Adam and Eve. But the wicked did whatever they pleased and rejected that command of God as well.

When Cain left home, he started a family, and a city, naming it after his first-born son. Among his descendants were people who first developed things of earthly or material value. But they also continued to ignore God's commands, and Lamech, the 5<sup>th</sup> generation from Cain, was said to have multiple wives.

The descendants of Seth lived in tents and thought of themselves as only passing through earth on their way to heaven. [Hebrews 11:13](#) All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ...<sup>16</sup> But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. [Hebrews 11:13, 16 NLT](#).

While the descendants of Seth remained separate from the descendants of Cain, they were able to maintain their pure worship of God. But as the children of Seth began to mingle and intermarry with the children of Cain, they also followed them in sin. [Romans 1:28](#) Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. [Romans 1:28 NLT](#). Sin spread throughout the whole earth like a deadly disease.

Adam lived for nearly a thousand years, and eight succeeding generations, seeing the results of sin among his descendants. He tried to hold back the spread of evil, by sharing the things that he had learned directly from God. But few were willing to listen to him, and often he was blamed for the suffering and evil that existed in the world.

Many people think that Science and knowledge have always increased. But the people that lived before the flood were bigger, stronger, smarter, and lived longer. Those who wished could get first or at least secondhand knowledge of the creation of the world, the workings of nature, but also, the law of God, and the plan of redemption. The development and growth of scientific knowledge benefited from long life and greater mental capacity. Great advancements have been made in more recent history by people who spend 20-50 years studying, learning, and imagining. Think of what was possible when a person could spend 800 years studying and learning. The ability to gain a knowledge of God from one who walked and talked with Him, has never been possible since the death of Adam. And before the flood, anyone who wished could even see angels guarding the entrance to the garden of Eden and the tree of life.

In a world full of evil, there was a line of holy men who loved God and maintained a connection with heaven. They lived nearly a thousand years, with great minds, and continued to grow in their knowledge of God. They also shared this knowledge with their own children and with the rest of the world. Through all ages, God has always had faithful people, who loved and obeyed Him.

Enoch was one of these people and he lived and grew in his relationship with God for 365 years. He learned firsthand from Adam the story of how sin entered the world, and he also learned about the promise of a Redeemer. His first son was born when he was 65 years old, and the love that he experienced, opened him up to an even deeper and closer relationship with God. He understood more clearly the sacrifice God would make when He would sacrifice His only son to save humanity. Enoch meditated on this great love of God each day and shared his thoughts with others.

The Bible said Enoch walked with God, but this did not mean he was in a trance or vision all the time. He carried out the duties of his daily life and did not permanently isolate himself from the world. It meant that his heart and life were in harmony with God's will. Beyond being able to talk directly with Adam, Enoch was honored to receive information directly from God. But this privilege didn't make him proud, and the closer his connection with God, the more he understood his own faults.

The greatly increasing wickedness on earth made Enoch very sad, and he avoided constant exposure to it, so it would not lessen his reverence for God. He spent a lot of time in prayer, always trying to understand the will of God. Enoch learned of God's plan to destroy the wicked world with a flood. He learned more details about the plan of Redemption, and the death of Christ. He was shown some events that would occur after the flood, including the second coming of Christ and the end of

the world. Enoch had wondered why the wicked and the good both returned to dust in the same way, so he was shown how the righteous would be rewarded, and the wicked burned in fire, after the resurrection. [Jude 1:14](#) Enoch, who lived in the seventh generation after Adam, prophesied about these people. He said, "Listen! The Lord is coming with countless thousands of his holy ones <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on the people of the world. He will convict every person of all the ungodly things they have done and for all the insults that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." [Jude 1:14-15 NLT](#).

Enoch was a prophet and preacher, sharing the things he learned from God with any who would hear, even among the descendants of Cain. People who loved and respected God would come to him for advice. He preached about the love of God, and he fearlessly reproved the wicked for their sins, and pleaded with them to turn from their evil ways. The Spirit of God is like a two-edged sword, giving reproof and warning, as well as teaching about the love, compassion, and mercy of God. The Spirit of God went with Enoch, and some repented and turned from their wicked ways, but most made fun of him and continued in their sin. It will be the same in the last days when the Spirit of God moves his messengers to reprove the wicked in the world.

Setting aside time for prayer and listening to God was one of the biggest priorities for Enoch. In fact, the busier or more urgent his work, the more he prayed. After working among the people, he would withdraw for a time to be alone with God. When he would return to his work after these times of quiet solitude, his face would glow with a holy light, reflecting the glory of God.

For 300 years, especially after the birth of his son, Enoch continued to grow more in harmony with heaven, even as he unsuccessfully tried to turn back the tide of evil in the world. For 3 centuries, Enoch walked with God, striving for purity, and a closer relationship with Him. Finally, one day God removed him from this sinful world to the peace and joy of heaven. [Matthew 5:8](#) God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. [Matthew 5:8 NLT](#). Enoch became the first of the human race to enter heaven.

There were people who saw Enoch being taken and thought he had gone to one of his places of solitude. So, they searched for him, but he was not found because God had taken him. There was a lesson in the translation of Enoch, that the result of Adam's sin did not make it hopeless for us to be in harmony with heaven. Many people were asking, "What is the point of trying to be good, and obey God since you end up dead just like the wicked?" Satan wanted everyone to believe that there was neither reward for the righteous, or punishment for the wicked. But God showed with Enoch: [Hebrews 11:6](#) ... he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

[Hebrews 11:6 NLT](#). Enoch was proof that people can resist temptation, and keep the law of God, and become pure and holy, even in a sinful world.

[Hebrews 11:5](#) It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying--"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. [Hebrews 11:5 NLT](#). Enoch showed the state of holiness that must be reached by all who will be translated to heaven at the time of the second coming of Christ. [Revelation 14:3](#) This great choir sang a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God and before the four living beings and the twenty-four elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. [Revelation 14:3 NLT](#). There will be great wickedness in the end, like it was before the flood, but God's people will do His will and reflect the character of Christ. Like Enoch, they will also condemn sin and warn the world of the coming judgment. Then the righteous will receive their reward, some without dying. [1 Corinthians 15:51](#) But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! <sup>52</sup> It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. [1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NLT](#). [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#) For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. <sup>17</sup> Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> So encourage each other with these words. [1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 7—The Flood*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 6-7](#).

Before the flood, nature had suffered death and decay because of sin, but it still retained much of the amazing beauty that God had created. The trees were much bigger and more beautiful, and the wood was almost as hard as stone. There was a great variety of fruit, and the ground was rich with plants and flowers. What we now think of as precious metals and stones were common.

1600 years and 10 generations after sin, the effects of the tree of life were still felt, as Noah lived longer than Adam had. There were giants, and men of great strength, wisdom, and skill. Even after sin, if they had chosen to obey God's law, they could have accomplished much of His purpose for our world. They had the ability to create and do amazing things, but they used their gifts to glorify themselves, and for evil. They tried to outdo each other by building beautiful homes and decorating them with gold, silver, and gems. They loved nature instead of the God who created it, and they worshipped the works of their own hands.

In the fields and among the trees, beautiful gardens were created for the worship of idols. Everything that could delight the senses and arouse sinful desires was used to attract worshippers. By worshipping the creations of their own hands and imaginations instead of God, they lowered themselves. Man will not rise higher than what he worships, and since they gave their false gods human characteristics, they naturally degraded themselves. [Psalm 115:8](#) And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them. [Psalm 115:8 NLT](#). It is a law of human nature that we are changed by what we look at.

[Genesis 6:5](#) The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil.

[Genesis 6:5 NLT](#). Men abused their power over women and took multiple wives. If someone coveted something that his neighbor had, including his woman, he took it by force and violence. They enjoyed killing animals and eating them, which made them more cruel and bloodthirsty. Eventually even the value of human life became meaningless to them.

The world was so young, but wickedness had become so deep and widespread that God could no longer allow it to continue. [Genesis 6:7](#) And the LORD said, "I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing--all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them."

[Genesis 6:7 NLT](#). [Genesis 6:3](#) Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their

normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years." [Genesis 6:3 NLT](#). God would destroy almost the entire human population, along with the beautiful world He had created for their benefit, and the earth would become desolate, making it harder for them to survive.

There were still some of the descendants of Seth, who kept alive the knowledge of God, and tried to hold back the tide of evil. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, who overlapped the life of Adam by over 200 years, was one. 120 years before the flood, God told Noah to build a boat, to save any who would choose to believe. For 120 years, while he was building the ark, Noah preached the warning God gave him, begging people to turn from their evil, and be saved from the flood. Even before Noah was born, Enoch had shared what God showed him about a coming flood.

God gave Noah detailed plans and instructions for building the ark. Human knowledge at the time could not have designed a boat of adequate size and durability. It was like a ship and a house combined with three floors, a door on the side, and windows on top. There were rooms inside for animals and people, all of which received natural light. As was previously mentioned, wood back then was almost as hard as stone, and cyprus or gopher wood was specifically selected by God. Even though men were bigger and stronger back then, the trees were also bigger and harder to cut. Everything was built according to God's plan, but even still it would not have been able to survive the storm without God's protection.

[Hebrews 11:7](#) It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith. [Hebrews 11:7 NLT](#). The warning Noah preached was backed by the action he took in building the ark. Everything he owned was used to finance the construction, and over the 120 years, many came from every direction to see the strange sight and they heard the message.

There were some who at first seemed to believe the warning but were not willing to turn from their sins. Others were more convinced but couldn't take the ridicule and eventually joined those making fun of Noah. In fact, those who are convinced at first, but then reject the Spirit of God calling to them, often become the most bold and defiant scoffers.

There were many among the unbelievers who claimed to still worship God and said that their images and idols represented Him. But with their focus on objects and things which they made to represent Him, they lost the sense of the majesty, power, and holiness of God. These were the first to reject Noah's message, claiming God's law was no longer in effect, so why would He destroy them for

breaking it. If those who heard Noah had been keepers of God's law, they would have recognized that the message was from Him.

When God told Adam and Eve they would die if they ate the fruit, Eve believed the serpent instead when he said to her, [Genesis 3:4](#) "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. [Genesis 3:4 NLT](#). When Noah said God was going to destroy the world, important and influential men said, he is just trying to scare us. God will never destroy His own creation, and the people He made. Virtually the entire world believed the lie, and treated Noah as a crazy old man, and even ridiculed him.

The earth before the flood was watered by a mist or dew, and people had never seen or even heard of rain before. People had observed the laws of nature for hundreds of years and thought of them as unchangeable. They believed that nature was above God and that even He could not change it. So, they carried on with their lives as usual, eating, drinking, partying, building, and planning for the future. Some even went out of their way to defy God with greater deeds of wickedness.

If enough people had believed Noah and turned from their wickedness, God would not have needed to destroy the world. Nineveh was an example of that: God sent Jonah to preach that the city would be destroyed, but when they repented and turned from their wickedness, God didn't destroy the city.

When Noah finished building the ark, the time for decision and change was almost up. But God would give the people even one more evidence of the truth of Noah's warning. One day, as the people were jeering and mocking, they were silenced, as birds and animals of every kind were seen coming into the ark. They came in pairs, a male and a female, and clean animals by 7. Animals obeyed the command of God that people rejected. But even this unexplainable occurrence did not motivate anyone to repent and enter the ark.

After the animals were in, [Genesis 7:1](#) ... the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. [Genesis 7:1 NLT](#). Then a cloud of glory appeared at the entrance of the ark as the Lord Himself shut the massive door [[Genesis 7:16](#)]. God had shut the door and only He would open it. Noah was now safely in the ark and those who rejected God's mercy were shut out. In the same way, before His second coming, when His intercession for us is complete, the door of mercy will be shut. At that time, Satan will be allowed to have more control over those who have chosen him, and they will try to destroy God's people, but even as Noah was safe in the ark, God will protect His people.

For days after the door was shut, nothing happened. To the people outside, this confirmed their belief that Noah was crazy and there would be no flood. Wicked people gathered around the ark, shouting, and jeering and even using violence

against the ark. But after 7 days had passed, dark clouds appeared in the sky, followed by thunder, lightning, and large drops of rain. The day grew darker as the rain increased. Then fountains of water began to come out of the ground, and the windows of heaven were opened [[Genesis 7:11](#)]. Rivers overflowed their banks, flooding valleys, and massive rocks shot into the sky, propelled by the jets of water coming from the earth. At the same time, so much water was falling that it was like great rivers of water pouring down from the sky.

The people and animals outside the ark were terrified beyond description. Satan himself who was forced to be in the midst of the storm even feared for his safety. Satan, and men cursed God, and charged Him with cruelty and unfairness. Some pleaded for mercy at the ark, but it was in vain. The people saw their mistake, but were not repentant, and if the flood had been stopped, they would have returned to their disobedience and wicked ways. In the same way, when the earth is about to be destroyed by fire at end of time, those who are about to be punished will know what they did wrong but will not repent.

People tried to save themselves by climbing onto the ark, but they were washed off by the waves. Some tied their children to animals knowing their instinct to survive was strong. Others tied themselves to tall trees on the highest hills, but the trees were even uprooted and tossed about in the churning water. Men and animals fought for the highest points of safety, but they were all swept away at last. The ark trembled and shook but strong angels were ordered to keep it safe.

[2 Peter 3:5](#) They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. <sup>6</sup> Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. <sup>7</sup> And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. [2 Peter 3:5-7 NLT](#). A time will come when people on earth will once again be destroyed if they reject the warning, and cling to their sins.

Jesus, in describing the time of the end said: [Matthew 24:38](#) In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. <sup>39</sup> People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. [Matthew 24:38-39 NLT](#). People were not destroyed by the flood because they were eating and drinking. When they rejected God and His law, they also misused the gifts He gave them. They indulged their appetites, eating and drinking things that were bad for their bodies. And they made a mockery of the sacred institution of marriage by freely indulging their passions.

It is not hard to see that these conditions exist today. Actions that in themselves are not wrong become sinful when abused and taken to extreme. People who are honored members of Church indulge their appetites on unhealthy food and drink. Others misuse the material gifts God has given by abusing the poor and those under their power. Then of course, there is just plain wickedness of every kind, everywhere, as bad as what existed before the flood.

Noah warned sinners before the flood to repent and escape destruction in the ark. As the second coming of Christ approaches, God will call people to give a warning to the world, preparing them for the coming judgment. Those who heed the warning, and repent, will be forgiven, but many will love their sins too much to give them up. Since their life is not in harmony with God's government, they defend themselves by claiming His law is no longer in effect.

Of the entire population of the world before the flood, only 8 believed and obeyed. In the end times, the majority will also reject the warnings. [2 Peter 3:3](#) Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created." [2 Peter 3:3-4 NLT](#). Many even among His professed followers will feel no urgency because they believe before the judgment comes Christ will come and reign 1000 years. There will be plenty of time then to get their lives in order and to warn the world. But this doctrine is not what Jesus and the apostles taught. [Luke 18:8](#) I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?" [Luke 18:8 NLT](#). [Matthew 24:38](#) In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. <sup>39</sup> People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. [Matthew 24:38-39 NLT](#). [2 Timothy 3:1](#) You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. <sup>2</sup> For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. <sup>3</sup> They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. <sup>4</sup> They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. <sup>5</sup> They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! [2 Timothy 3:1-5 NLT](#).

Before the flood, Satan used those with influence to distract people by providing exciting activities to amuse and give them pleasure and thus distract from the warnings given by Noah. It was successful then, and he will use it again.

In Noah's day, experts declared that it was against the laws of nature for the world to be destroyed by water. Everyone was convinced, and rejected Noah's warning, but the flood still came. He who created the world knew how to use the laws of nature to accomplish His purpose. [Luke 17:26](#) "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. ... <sup>30</sup> Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. [Luke 17:26, 30 NLT](#). [2 Peter 3:10](#) But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. [2 Peter 3:10 NLT](#).

In the last days, experts will say it can't happen, religious teachers will predict 1000 years of peace and prosperity, and the world will be busy with business and pleasure. [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#) When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape. [1 Thessalonians 5:3 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 8—After the Flood*

The flood water covered the highest mountains by more than 20 feet. As the family was tossed about on the swells, they must have thought they would not survive, but Noah had faith that God would protect them. As the water level began to drop, God guided the ark to calmer waters, provided by a group of mountains. Now that the great danger seemed over, they were anxious to return to dry land. 40 days after seeing the top of the first mountain, Noah released a raven to scout for plants, but it returned. A week later he sent a dove, which also returned but with an olive leaf in her beak. Next, they removed the roof of the ark, and all could see plenty of dry ground, but they still waited for God to tell them when to leave.

Finally, the sign came when the door was opened, and they were allowed to leave the ark. In thankfulness to God for His protection and looking forward to the great sacrifice God would make, Noah sacrificed one of each clean animal. God accepted the offering and made a promise that even if people became very wicked again, He would not destroy all life on the planet again. He also promised that they could count on seasons for planting and harvest, heat and cold, summer and winter, and not least of all day and night [[Genesis 8:20-22](#)]. Noah's act should be a lesson to us all, to bring our offerings to God, to show our thankfulness for all He has done for us.

Now that rain would be a part of nature, God realized that people might have a fear of it, so He gave them a sign. [Genesis 9:13](#) I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. [Genesis 9:13-15 NLT](#). Only those 8 that lived through the flood would remember it, but God intended for future generations to learn about the flood and His promise when they see a rainbow.

There is something else interesting about a rainbow because it is seen around the throne in heaven. In Ezekiel's vision of God in heaven, he wrote: [Ezekiel 1:28](#) All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me. [Ezekiel 1:28 NLT](#). And the apostle John wrote: [Revelation 4:2](#) And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones--like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. [Revelation 4:2-3 NLT](#). God used something that is always around Him to remind people of His promise of mercy.

The promise to Noah was also linked to a promise to the Israelites. [Isaiah 54:9](#) "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth, so now I swear that I will never again be angry and punish you. <sup>10</sup> For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the LORD, who has mercy on you. [Isaiah 54:9-10 NLT](#).

God also knew that some of the animals preserved on the ark could be dangerous to the small family. So, to protect them, He gave the animals a natural fear of people. [Genesis 9:2](#) All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. <sup>3</sup> I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. [Genesis 9:2-3 NLT](#). Before the flood, God never gave people permission to kill animals for food. But now, especially with the plants having been destroyed in the flood, God said they could kill and eat animals, but naturally only those that had been brought on the ark by 7's.

After the flood, there were many dead people and animals on the surface of the earth. But the same wind that God used to dry up the water, also reshaped the land, burying the dead. Mountains that were beautiful before the flood, after going through the water and the wind, were reshaped to be jagged and rocky, and some were completely gone. Precious metals and stones, gifts God had given, that had been used for crime and greed, were also buried along with the dead bodies. The bodies and plants that were buried in the earth are the source of the oil and coal that we now mine for energy. These energy sources are sometimes ignited where they lie buried, and when layers of limestone are burned and then combined with water, it burns even hotter. This leads to earthquakes and volcanoes. These natural disasters will happen more often as the time of Christ's second coming gets near.

The depths of the earth contain the elements that the Lord can use to cleanse it. Water from deep under the surface of the earth combined with water from above to create the flood. Since that time, God has also used fire to destroy the very wicked. [Isaiah 64:1](#) Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! <sup>2</sup> As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! <sup>3</sup> When you came down long ago, you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked! [Isaiah 64:1-3 NLT](#). [Nahum 1:3](#) The LORD is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet. [Nahum 1:3 NLT](#).

But when the second coming of Christ draws near, there will be more terrible occurrences of nature being destructive. [Nahum 1:5](#) In his presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed.

<sup>6</sup> Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence.

[Nahum 1:5-6 NLT](#). [Psalm 144:5](#) Open the heavens, LORD, and come down. Touch the mountains so they billow smoke. <sup>6</sup> Hurl your lightning bolts and scatter your enemies! Shoot your arrows and confuse them! [Psalm 144:5-6 NLT](#).

Even as water from the deep combined with water from above to destroy the wicked in the flood, in the end, fire from the deep will combine with lightning and fire from above to destroy the wicked on the earth. But the righteous will be preserved in the midst of the fire as Noah's family was preserved in the midst of the flood. [Psalm 91:9](#) If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, <sup>10</sup> no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home.

[Psalm 91:9-10 NLT](#). [Psalm 27:5](#) For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. [Psalm 27:5 NLT](#). [Psalm 91:14](#) The LORD says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. [Psalm 91:14 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 9—The Literal Week*

The 7-day week together with the Sabbath began at creation and continued throughout Bible history. When God put His law into writing, He said: [Exodus 20:8](#) "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> You have six days each week for your ordinary work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. [Exodus 20:8-11 NLT](#). This commandment reminds us that we should work and not be idle, but that we should also rest and remember. It also makes it very clear that the days of creation are literal.

Some who claim to believe the Bible but like evolutionary theories argue that the 6-days of creation described in Genesis took place over thousands of years. But this contradicts the words written by God Himself in the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. At the time the following psalm was written, it was understood that creation occurred by the words spoken by God. [Psalm 33:6](#) The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. ... <sup>9</sup> For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command. [Psalm 33:6, 9 NLT](#). There is no reading of the Bible that teaches hundreds or thousands of years are represented by each day of creation described in Genesis. Each day was specifically said to have an evening and a morning.

Scientists today have measured the age of some objects to be much older than a Biblical timeline allows. But science that disagrees with the Bible proves nothing. Fossilized remains of men, animals, and plants have been discovered which support the Biblical story of the flood, but scientists have turned this blessing into a curse by attaching their own explanations to them. Satan wants people to believe things that contradict the Bible, because then he can discredit the law of God. One of the reasons he likes people to ignore the law and especially the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is that it clearly teaches that God made the heavens and the earth.

There are many things we do not understand, but the origin of life is not one of them because it is clearly explained in the Bible. So why do so many who claim to be Christians choose to believe human reasoning instead? Many say it is hard to interpret or understand the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, but they reject the simple description of creation in favor of complex evolutionary theories. [Deuteronomy 29:29](#) "The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed

to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions. [Deuteronomy 29:29 NLT](#). It is not necessary for us to understand the science of how God made the world, but we should have faith that He exists and has the power to create.

God has allowed human knowledge in science to increase greatly, but when people try to explain the origins of the world on their own without regard to what the Bible teaches, they will arrive at wrong conclusions. Those who doubt the creation story, will go a step further and doubt the existence of God. The Bible should be treated as the reliable word of God and should not be tested by science. Those who treat science as more reliable than the word of God will find contradictions, but if Scripture is treated as the authority, there is science that can be in harmony with it. Most scientific knowledge are theories, some of which are contradictory, but the ones that agree with the Bible and nature as we know it can be considered truth.

Many people think that they can completely understand what God can and what He cannot do, because they believe He is limited by the laws of nature. They do not account for the possibility that their understanding of nature is limited. Some want to explain everything, even how the Spirit of God works on the human mind and refuse to believe what they cannot explain. But there are many things that God can do in harmony with the laws of nature that are so beyond our comprehension that they appear as supernatural.

[Nehemiah 9:6](#) "You alone are the LORD. You made the skies and the heavens and all the stars. You made the earth and the seas and everything in them. You preserve them all, and the angels of heaven worship you. [Nehemiah 9:6 NLT](#). [Acts 17:28](#) For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' [Acts 17:28 NLT](#). [Isaiah 40:26](#) Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. [Isaiah 40:26 NLT](#). [Psalm 147:8](#) He covers the heavens with clouds, provides rain for the earth, and makes the grass grow in mountain pastures. [Psalm 147:8 NLT](#).

All true science is in harmony with God, and true education leads to obedience of His laws. [Psalm 19:1](#) For the choir director: A psalm of David. The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. [Psalm 19:1 NLT](#). But we should not make the mistake of thinking that we can fully understand God. [Job 11:7](#) "Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything about the Almighty?" <sup>8</sup> Such knowledge is higher than the heavens--and who are you? It is deeper than the underworld--what do you know? <sup>9</sup> It is broader than the earth and wider than the sea. [Job 11:7-9 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 10—The Tower of Babel*

[Genesis 7:1](#) When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. [Genesis 7:1 NLT](#). But given that human beings have a naturally sinful nature, wickedness quickly developed after the flood. As the descendants of Cain were influenced by his character, so were the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who would repopulate the entire earth.

After an incident where the 3 sons revealed their respect or lack of respect for their father, Noah pronounced the following blessing and curse on them. [Genesis 9:25](#) Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham: "May Canaan be cursed! May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives." <sup>26</sup> Then Noah said, "May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed, and may Canaan be his servant! <sup>27</sup> May God expand the territory of Japheth! May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant." [Genesis 9:25-27 NLT](#). Canaan, the son of Ham, was cursed, which did not cause his wickedness but was an inspired statement of the future. In prophetic terms, the blessing on Shem was a revelation that some of his descendants would become the chosen people of God, and through them would come the Savior of the world.

The prophecy spoken by Noah did not cause the result, but it was a statement of what would happen, based on the character of the sons. Generally, children inherit characteristics from their parents, but probably more importantly, they learn from observing them. So, the lack of respect shown by Ham was reproduced in his son. Just as much wickedness came into the world through Cain, the same could be said of Ham. [Ecclesiastes 9:18](#) ... one sinner can destroy much that is good. [Ecclesiastes 9:18 NLT](#).

The same is true on the other side. The character traits that went with Shem's respect for his father produced a line of holy men. [Psalm 37:18](#) Day by day the LORD takes care of the innocent, and they will receive an inheritance that lasts forever. ... <sup>26</sup> The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing. [Psalm 37:18, 26 NLT](#). [Deuteronomy 7:9](#) Understand, therefore, that the LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands. [Deuteronomy 7:9 NLT](#).

The descendants of Noah all continued to live in the mountains where the ark had come to rest. But two groups eventually formed, those who still honored and worshipped God, and those who wanted nothing to do with Him. The latter group finally left and settled on the plain of Shinar on the bank of the Euphrates River.

God had given instructions to spread out and repopulate the whole earth, but the people ignored God's command and stuck together. They even decided to build an enormous tower that would be a wonder of the world. They thought they could build a kingdom that would rule the world, and this tower could be the centerpiece of the capital city. They planned for the tower to reach the clouds and be a monument of their power and wisdom. They even decided to build the tower higher than the highest mountain, so that if another flood occurred, they could save themselves.

The tower builders rejected God and His law as being unreasonable and severe, but by doing so they were accepting Satan as their ruler. The truth of a loving God that would sacrifice Himself was corrupted when animals were replaced by children on the sacrificial altar. The principles of God's government are truth, justice, and love, but when they rejected His law, they adopted the principles of Satan's government which are lying, oppression, and hate. Some who initially joined this group had not rejected God and had been misled about the motives and intentions of the leaders. For this reason, God had delayed the confusion, so the truth could be revealed. This allowed Noah, Shem, and other faithful followers of God to continue trying to reach them with the truth.

Good progress was being made on the tower, and a portion of it was beautifully decorated with gold and silver and made into a temple for their idols. But God was not pleased with the disobedience and wickedness of the people. [Genesis 11:5](#) But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. <sup>6</sup> "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! <sup>7</sup> Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other." [Genesis 11:5-7 NLT](#). Progress on the building was halted because they couldn't communicate with each other, and then God even struck the top of the tower with lightning, causing it to break off and fall to the ground. The wicked plans of these people ended in shame and defeat.

It was for the good of the world that God put a stop to the building but more importantly to the kingdom that was being established. The confusion of their language put an end to their united rebellion against Him. Even though sin has been allowed to run its course on this earth, there are times when God interferes with extreme evil for the good of humanity.

People slowly began to gather into groups that understood each other and left the area. This caused them to finally obey God's command to spread out over the whole earth. Noah lived for 350, and Shem for 500 years after the flood, both preaching and teaching to those who would listen about the true God. But now,

there were many groups of people who had little knowledge of the true God, and no easy way to hear and learn.

There are people in the present time who like the tower builders, rebel against God. They hate His law and reject His word, and they boast about their own knowledge, and because God allows them to continue in their defiance, they become bolder.

[Ecclesiastes 8:11](#) When a crime is not punished quickly, people feel it is safe to do wrong. [Ecclesiastes 8:11 NLT](#).

Even among those that call themselves Christians today are many who ignore parts of the Bible and add their own interpretation to other parts. People like to hear sermons that tell them sinners won't die and that it isn't necessary to keep the law of God. If Christians would just accept the clear word of God, they would all be united, but instead there is confusion. As a result, the church that is called Babylon has fallen. [Revelation 14:8](#) Then another angel followed him through the sky, shouting, "Babylon is fallen--that great city is fallen--because she made all the nations of the world drink the wine of her passionate immorality." [Revelation 14:8 NLT](#). [Revelation 18:2](#) He gave a mighty shout: "Babylon is fallen--that great city is fallen! She has become a home for demons. She is a hideout for every foul spirit, a hideout for every foul vulture and every foul and dreadful animal. [Revelation 18:2 NLT](#).

There are others who try to make their life on earth like heaven by becoming rich and powerful, but many do so by taking advantage of others. [Psalm 73:8](#) They scoff and speak only evil; in their pride they seek to crush others. [Psalm 73:8 NLT](#). They may appear successful and happy, but in the end, they will lose everything and will be disappointed. [Psalm 33:13](#) The LORD looks down from heaven and sees the whole human race. <sup>14</sup> From his throne he observes all who live on the earth. [Psalm 33:13-14 NLT](#). [Psalm 33:10](#) The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes. <sup>11</sup> But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken. [Psalm 33:10-11 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 11—The Call of Abram*

After the people were dispersed from the tower of Babel, nearly the entire world had forsaken God and were worshipping idols. But God wanted to keep alive a knowledge of Himself and His law on earth, so He chose Abram for this purpose. This knowledge had been passed down from Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, and Shem, to Abram, who faithfully served God even though he was surrounded by unbelievers and idol worshippers. [Psalm 145:18](#) The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth. [Psalm 145:18 NLT](#). Since Abram was faithful to what he knew, God communicated directly with him, a knowledge of His law and of the plan of salvation. He also promised him great blessings, and many descendants.

But these blessings were preceded by a command: [Genesis 12:1](#) The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." [Genesis 12:1-3 NLT](#).

Abram had to give up the life he knew and be separated from the influence of friends and extended family. God called him to a lifestyle that would be strange and different from everyone around him, and this would be easier among strangers. It was a big step of faith to leave all that was familiar and comfortable to him, and to convince his household to go with him. [Hebrews 11:8](#) It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith--for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. [Hebrews 11:8-9 NLT](#).

God calls people today, not in a voice that can be heard, but in indirect ways. They may need to leave a comfortable home, a good job, family, and friends, and live a life of hardship and sacrifice. Sometimes comforts of life can get in the way of doing the work God wants them to do. Those who have the faith of Abram, will, like Paul says, share in the eternal glory of heaven. [2 Corinthians 4:17](#) For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! [2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT](#). [Romans 8:18](#) Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. [Romans 8:18 NLT](#).

Abram was called when he was living in Ur of the Chaldees, where some of his family members including his father and brother combined idolatry with the worship of the true God. Their first stop was Haran where they stayed until his father Terah died. Of his family, only his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, were ready to continue with him. But there were others, unrelated people whom Abram had led to the worship of the true God, who went with him.

The first place they stopped and set up camp was Shechem, a valley with grass and water for their herds of animals, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. A land that was later described to his descendants like this: [Deuteronomy 8:7](#) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills. <sup>8</sup> It is a land of wheat and barley; of grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates; of olive oil and honey. [Deuteronomy 8:7-8 NLT](#). But the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, lived there, and they worshipped false gods, and even offered their children as sacrifices to their gods. [Genesis 12:7](#) Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. [Genesis 12:7 NLT](#).

Their next stop was Bethel, where Abram again set up an altar and offered a sacrifice to God. Every place where they camped, Abram showed his faithfulness to God and set up an altar. But it wasn't only him who worshipped and prayed, because all who chose to move and camp with him were called every morning and evening to worship. And when they moved on, the altar was left standing and served as a witness to any who passed by that Abram had been there and had worshipped the true and living God of heaven on that spot. There were even Canaanites who knew this because Abram had shared his faith and taught them about God.

Once Abram's faith was tested when there was a shortage of rain, and the ground dried up and the pasture for his flocks withered. Hunger and starvation threatened his entire camp. Rather than returning home to Ur to escape the famine, Abram moved to Egypt temporarily, fully intending to return to the land God had promised to him. But Abram's faith in the promise and protection of God would be tested there. God wants the best for His children, but sometimes allows trials to test them, but He never leaves them. [Jeremiah 29:11](#) For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. [Jeremiah 29:11 NLT](#). But God knows the trials that are needed to purify our characters so that we can more clearly reflect His image to others.

In Egypt, Abram failed to trust in God's protection and tried to protect himself by lying about his wife, saying she was his sister. Sarai was very beautiful, and Abram

feared that the Egyptians would kill him so they could take his wife for themselves. He reasoned that he was still telling the truth because she was his half-sister, but it seemed he was only thinking of protecting himself and not his wife with this plan. He was not wrong in his fear because when the king saw Sarai, he took her to his palace and gave Abram a generous dowry for her. But God still protected Sarai even though Abram's faith faltered, and He caused Pharaoh to know the truth. Pharaoh returned Sarai to Abram, reproved him for lying, and asked him to leave.

God's protection of Abram's family in this case was a warning to any who might think to harm them. [Psalm 105:14](#) Yet he did not let anyone oppress them. He warned kings on their behalf: <sup>15</sup> "Do not touch my chosen people, and do not hurt my prophets." [Psalm 105:14-15 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 12—Abraham in Canaan*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 13-15](#); [17:1-16](#); [18](#)

Abram and Lot returned to Bethel very wealthy with animals, silver, and gold. In fact, they had so many animals that the workers taking care of them were arguing among themselves because there was not enough grass for all the animals. Abram said to Lot, let's separate our households, so we will not have disagreements between us. The whole land is before us, so choose which way you want to go, and I will go the other direction. Abram showed his generosity by letting Lot choose, because God had promised the land to him, and on top of that he was Lot's senior.

How many families or churches have been ripped apart because of disagreements over property and possessions. Abram said, let there be no disagreements between us because we are family. In fact, children of God should all think of each other as family. [Romans 12:10](#) Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. [Romans 12:10 NLT](#). [Philippians 2:4](#) Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. [Philippians 2:4 NLT](#).

Lot should have told his uncle to choose first, but when he saw how beautiful the Jordan valley was, thinking it must even be like the garden of Eden, he didn't want to take the chance that Abram would choose it. Not only did he notice the beautiful land, but there were also great cities that would have some of the comforts that they had left behind in Ur. Lot also saw the potential to get even richer by doing business in the cities but overlooked the wickedness in them. Unfortunately, he didn't foresee the result of that selfish choice on his family and his entire household.

After they separated, Abram moved his camp to Hebron, pitching his tent under the oaks of Mamre, and built an altar to the Lord there. In the open air, with olive trees, grape vines, wheat fields, and plenty of pasture for his flocks, Abram lived a simple life. He did not try to hide his beliefs from his surrounding neighbors and was willing to share them with anyone and everyone. He was friendly and hospitable, and gained a reputation as a wise man, and a mighty prince.

True followers of God will not treat their beliefs as a precious treasure to be hidden and jealously guarded. In fact, when Christ is in His rightful place in their hearts and minds, sin and selfishness will gradually be crowded out, and the love of God will be impossible to contain as it shines out like bright beams of sun light. God's people represent Him to the world, and it is by their lives that the world judges Him. Patience, kindness, gratefulness, humility, mercy, and love, are character traits that should be shining as light into the darkness of a selfish and sinful world.

Abram was known for his faith, generosity, obedience, and humility, but he was also brave. Even though he was known as a religious teacher, the 3 Amorite brothers, Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, in whose territory he was camping wanted to have an alliance with him. There was a lot of violence in the land, and greater numbers meant more security.

Chedorlaomer, king of Elam had been collecting tribute from the Canaanites, but when five kings rebelled, he decided to attack and force them to submit to his authority. The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar joined forces and fought Chedorlaomer and his allies in the valley of Siddim, and they were defeated. Chedorlaomer and his allies then entered their cities and took whatever they wanted, including prisoners of war, among whom were Lot and his family.

When Abram heard what had happened, with God's blessing, he decided to go to Lot's rescue. He armed 318 brave and loyal men, all of whom were children of those who worked and lived in his household. These were all men who had been taught from the time they were born, to trust and obey God. Abram led his men together with his allies, Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, on a rescue mission against the Elamites. Chedorlaomer and his allies were partying, and celebrating their victory, which made them completely unprepared when Abram and his men attacked. The king of Elam was killed, and his army was completely defeated. Lot and all the other people who had been taken as captives, along with the goods that had been taken were all recovered. Abram showed that just because he was a righteous and religious man, it did not mean he was afraid of fighting when it came to defending the oppressed. He did a great service for his countrymen and became well known for his bravery. When he returned from battle, the king of Sodom came out to meet him, and begged that his people be returned, but that all the things recovered could be kept by the victors. But Abram, with no intention of keeping anything himself, immediately released all the prisoners, and only asked that his 3 allies should receive their share of the goods recovered for the part they played in the rescue.

Abram, unlike most people, had no thought of the wealth that could be gained by winning a war. His only concern was the rescue of people, which showed that he was keeping the law of God, later given to the Israelites. [Leviticus 19:18](#) ... love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. [Leviticus 19:18 NLT](#). In addition to that, he wanted to make it abundantly clear to everyone, that his prosperity was the result of God's blessings and not from taking things by force in battle. [Genesis 14:23](#) that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich.' [Genesis 14:23 NLT](#).

The victorious Abram, on his return from battle, was also greeted by Melchizedek, king of Salem. This person was called a priest of God Most High, even before the Levitical priesthood had been established. In fact, this mysterious priest pronounced God's blessing on Abram who was already called and blessed by God Himself. [Genesis 14:19](#) Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered. [Genesis 14:19-20 NLT](#). Even as tithes would later be given to the Levitical priests, Abram gave a tenth of all the goods recovered, as a tithe to the priest Melchizedek.

When Abram returned home, he was a little worried that the nations he had defeated would return to get revenge on him. But he was probably more concerned with the fact that he still didn't have a son and didn't see how the promise of God would be fulfilled. With these things on his mind as he went to sleep, he had a vision, where he was first reassured of God's protection. [Genesis 15:1](#) Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great." [Genesis 15:1 NLT](#). With that assurance of protection, Abram then asked God about the matter of his heir. He asked if he should adopt Eliezer, his most loyal and trusted servant. But God reassured him that the promise would be fulfilled through a son of his own. God told him to go outside and look at the stars and know that his descendants would be as many as the stars.

On another occasion, God spoke to Abram again and reminded him of the promise that his descendants would inherit the land. Still, without a son, Abram asked God for some kind of evidence or sign that this was still His plan. So, God told Abram to perform a ceremony that was customary at the time when two people had a very important agreement and promise between them. In this case, it was a sacrificial ceremony involving a cow, a female goat, and a ram, each 3 years old and cut in half. To this was added a turtledove and a young pigeon, undivided. Abram then reverently walked between the sacrificed animals and made a promise that he would always obey God. He stayed among the sacrifices, keeping away any birds or animals that would attempt to eat them. When the sun was going down, he fell into a deep sleep, and he dreamed he was in a terrifying darkness. Then God spoke and told him that before his descendants would take possession of the land of Canaan, they would suffer as slaves in another country. He was shown the entire plan of redemption beginning with the death of Christ on the cross, to His second coming, and even the restoration of Eden to the newly created earth. When the sun had completely set and it was dark, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the sacrificed animals and completely consumed them. Then the voice

again repeated the promise of the land to his descendants, from the Nile River to the Euphrates River.

When Abram was 99 years old, God appeared to him again, reminding him of the covenant between them. At that time God changed his name to Abraham, which had the meaning, father of many nations. He also changed Sarai's name to Sarah, meaning princess, because she would be the mother of kings. At this time God told Abraham that all the males in his household should be circumcised, and that from then on, every male should be circumcised when they are 8 days old. This physical difference in their bodies would distinguish them from idol worshippers and unbelievers. It was a sign that they were chosen and belonged to God, and that they would keep the covenant promise that was made between Abraham and God. In addition, God told Abraham that his descendants should not marry heathens and idol worshippers, because it might tempt them to adopt the idolatry of their spouse.

Abraham was greatly honored by God. Angels and even God in human form walked and talked with him face to face. One day Abraham noticed 3 strangers walking down the road. Showing his usual hospitality, he ran out to greet them and invited them for rest and refreshments. When they accepted, he went to Sarah and told her to start some bread, then he sat them down and washed their feet. Then he slaughtered a young calf to prepare them some fresh meat. This act of kindness was generally referred to many years later by the apostle Paul. [Hebrews 13:2](#) Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! [Hebrews 13:2 NLT](#).

Abraham had no idea who his guests were when he went so far out of his way to treat them kindly, though it began to dawn on him as they talked. When the 3 strangers got up to leave, Abraham walked with them. Then God told Abraham what He was planning to do to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, the two angels went on to visit the city in person to see how wicked it really was. God and the angels already knew how wicked the city was, but they were interacting with Abraham as a human judge might talk to a well-respected citizen. By now, Abraham fully realized who he was talking to, and out of concern for Lot and for other potentially innocent people, Abraham began to intercede for them. He bargained with God, getting Him to agree that the cities would not be destroyed if a certain number of righteous people could be found in them. Abraham started with 50, and got bolder as he went, bargaining God all the way down to 10. Including Lot and his family, Abraham thought surely there must be at least 10 righteous people living in those cities. We should feel the same compassion and concern for unsaved sinners as Abraham did. Every day and hour men and women are dying in the world, losing their opportunity to make a conscious choice to obey God. Where are the people like Abraham, who intercede and care for their

salvation. But Abraham was only showing the spirit of Christ by interceding for sinners, so it wasn't as if he was really getting God to be more merciful than He already was. Many years later, when Christ hung on the cross, carrying the weight of the sins of the world, he prayed for His persecutors. [Luke 23:34](#) Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice. [Luke 23:34 NLT](#).

Abraham did not just care for strangers and foreigners, but he cared for the souls of the more than 1000 people in his camp. As head of the entire camp, Abraham was an example to the head of each household of how to lead and guide their families. But he was more than just an example because he taught them as in a school, about the law of God and what was expected from each of them. In those days, the father was the ruler of his own household, but in the example set by Abraham, he was also to be the priest for his family. It was a great honor, but also a heavy responsibility for Abraham to be the father of the people who would be the guardians of the truth of God for the world. Years later when God spoke to Abraham's son Isaac, this is what he said about his father. [Genesis 26:5](#) "... Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." [Genesis 26:5 NLT](#).

In addition to the truths they were taught, Abraham's household were also taught about the dangers of mingling with idol worshippers and learning their practices. It was easier to isolate his household from the outside influences of strangers than it would have been from family and relatives. It was for this reason that God called Abraham out of Ur and away from his family and former friends.

[Genesis 18:19](#) I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised." [Genesis 18:19 NLT](#). Abraham had command of his household and parents in his camp were each to follow his example. But it was not until they truly obeyed God's law themselves, that they could really command their children after them. Parents were also to follow Abraham's example with prayer and worship within their own households. They should not get tired of teaching their children to love, respect, obey and please God.

What Abraham was passing on to his household was more than just a knowledge of God. He was passing on a lifestyle that the rest of the world could envy. The principles of God's government in heaven were taught in Abraham's household, and the benefits would be seen by outsiders. Parents were kind and fair to their children, and children were respectful and obedient to their parents. But parents were taught that kindness doesn't mean letting children do whatever they want, because children who always get their own way are generally not obedient and

respectful. Fairness was also carried out by people who had authority over others outside their family. The same law applied to master and servant, rich and poor, and both justice and compassion would be evident when correction or punishment was necessary. These principles would naturally lead to a happier, and more productive society.

There are too many today, even among religious teachers who claim the law of God is no longer binding. The effect of this on families and society is no different than idolatry. When parents do not feel the need to keep the law of God, they will not teach their children to keep it either. The result of this on society will be widespread evil.

Prayer is neglected in too many households today, and busyness crowds out morning and evening worship. Families do not even take a few minutes out of their day to worship and thank God for His goodness, and blessings. No prayer is offered asking for the presence and guidance of God as they go about their busy lives. God gave His own life to provide a way for them to be saved, but they don't even care. Those who claim to love God should follow the example of Abraham, and worship God every day. The father as priest of the household should lead, and both parents should pray for themselves and their children.

Even as Abraham's household was an example, like a light shining in the darkness, Christian homes today should also be seen as favorable examples of Christianity. It should be evident to all that it is a home with order, love, respect, and obedience.

## *Chapter 13—The Test of Fatih*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 16](#); [17:18-20](#); [21:1-14](#); [22:1-19](#).

This story takes a step back to the time before Abraham and Sarah's names were changed. Abram was about 85 [[Genesis 16:16](#)], and Sarai about 75 years old. Abram believed God's promise that he would have a son but eventually decided to help out. The long delay in having a child was a test for both of them and they failed. Realizing that she was too old to have a child now, Sarai suggested that Hagar, one of her servants, could have a child for her. Abram agreed and got Hagar pregnant. Having multiple wives was very common at the time, but according to God's law it was still a sin.

When Hagar became pregnant and realized that she would become the mother of a great nation, she became proud and considered herself Abram's wife and began to look down on her mistress. Sarai became jealous and now there was a lot of fighting between the two women. Even though it was Sarai's idea, she now blamed Abram and wanted to kick Hagar out of the household. Abram wouldn't allow this but was unwilling to elevate Hagar from her position as Sarai's servant. So, Sarai treated her so cruelly that Hagar fled.

When Hagar was alone in the wilderness, an angel appeared to her and told her to go back to her mistress and continue serving her. Then the angel told her that God saw how she was being treated, and gave her a promise, that her descendants would be too many to count. The angel also told her that she would have a son, and that she should name him Ishmael.

About 15 years later, when Abraham was almost 100, and Sarah nearly 90 years old, the promise of a son was again repeated to him. Ishmael was now a teenager, and Abraham and even the entire household thought that he would be the heir of the promise. With Abraham concerned over what would happen to Ishmael, God promised that he would become the father of a great nation as well.

When Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, the long-awaited promise was miraculously fulfilled when she gave birth to a son whom they named Isaac. This was a huge blow to Hagar as she was no longer the center of attention, and mother and son both hated the new child. Things eventually got so bad that the teenage Ishmael openly made fun of the young child Isaac. When Sarah saw this, she immediately demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away. She would not have this boy put her son in danger. It was unthinkable to Abraham to send his son away, but God told him to do as Sarah suggested, and not to worry because Ismael would survive and become the father of a great nation. With great sadness, Abraham obeyed God and did as Sarah demanded.

Because of Abraham's lack of faith in waiting for the promise of a son, and also for not trusting God to protect Sarah in Egypt, he was given another test. When he was about 120 years of age, he was to have his most difficult test of faith.

Abraham was camping at Beersheba at the time, with great wealth in money and in animals. He was greatly respected and honored as a mighty prince by his surrounding neighbors. There were many people living under his protection including hundreds of faithful and loyal servants. From the time God had called him to leave his home and family in Ur, Abraham had faithfully worshipped God and taught his entire household to do the same.

Now he heard the familiar voice of God telling him to do the unthinkable. [Genesis 22:2](#) "Take your son, your only son--yes, Isaac, whom you love so much--and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you." [Genesis 22:2 NLT](#). Of course, Abraham loved his son, but this was the son he was promised would have descendants without number. How could this possibly be God's will? How could this make sense in light of God's law to not kill? Abraham prayed, asking for confirmation that he had heard correctly, but no additional word from God was received.

Abraham made his decision but didn't tell anyone what God's command was. He took a donkey to carry the wood, two servants, his son Isaac, and set out on their journey. Carrying this burden of what he had to do was very difficult for Abraham, and Satan must have planted doubts in his mind. Finally on the third day, he saw a cloud over Mount Moriah, and he recognized it as a sign from God. Abraham believed that God could bring Isaac back to life if necessary. [Hebrews 11:19](#) Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead. [Hebrews 11:19 NLT](#).

At this point, Abraham told the servants to stay behind with the donkey, and he would go ahead with Isaac. As they climbed the mountain, Isaac said to his father, we have wood and fire but where will we get a lamb? Abraham's heart was breaking, but he only said, God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering. When they reached the place, Abraham finally had to tell Isaac what God told him to do. Isaac was a strong young man, and Abraham was old, so there was no way he could carry out God's command against his son's will. But Isaac was raised to respect and obey his father, and he also shared Abraham's faith and love for God. He was willing to sacrifice his life at God's command and laid himself on the altar. Abraham, unable to delay any longer was about to kill his son with a knife, when an angel called out to him to stop. [Genesis 22:12](#) "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God.

You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son." [Genesis 22:12 NLT](#).

It was only then that Abraham saw the ram that God provided for the sacrifice in Isaac's place. At that time, God renewed His covenant with Abraham, reminding him of the promise of descendants too numerous to count, but also of how through them all nations of the world would be blessed.

The great faith of Abraham stands out as an example to followers of God. Despite the doubts and questions he must have had, he obeyed. [James 2:23](#) And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. [James 2:23 NLT](#). [Galatians 3:7](#) The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. [Galatians 3:7 NLT](#). [James 2:21](#) Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. [James 2:21-22 NLT](#).

Too many people say that all that is needed is to believe in Christ and you are saved, as Paul said to the Philippian jailer. [Acts 16:31](#) They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." [Acts 16:31 NLT](#). But true faith will be demonstrated by obedience. [John 8:39](#) "Our father is Abraham!" they declared. "No," Jesus replied, "for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. [John 8:39 NLT](#). [James 2:17](#) So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. [James 2:17 NLT](#). It was through this experience that Abraham saw and understood the sacrifice of Christ. [John 8:56](#) Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad." [John 8:56 NLT](#). Not only did he go through the experience of the Father in giving up his only son to die but also experienced the ram dying as a substitute. But it was only a taste, because when Christ hung on the cross, no angel came to say that was enough. What greater proof can be given of God's love for us?

This test of Abraham was not only for him, and for us as readers, but it was for angels and the inhabitants of other worlds, to see that Abraham did fulfill his side of the covenant, and for them to get a taste of the future sacrifice God would make. This test of faith was much worse than what Adam experienced and failed. All of heaven could see that the accusations of Satan were false when God was able to say to Abraham: [Genesis 22:16](#) ... Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that <sup>17</sup> I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies.

<sup>18</sup> And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed--all because you have obeyed me." [Genesis 22:16-18 NLT](#). After watching this experience of Abraham, even the angels understood a little more clearly God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

## *Chapter 14—Destruction of Sodom*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 19](#).

Sodom was the most beautiful among the cities in the Jordan Valley, which was green like a tropical paradise. There were fruit bearing trees, vines, flowers, plentiful harvests, and lots of grass for flocks and herds on the surrounding hillsides. It was a popular stop for caravans from the East, which left many of their treasures in trade. Survival was easy, so people had time to devote to art, and with plenty of free time, it seems there were parties and celebrations all the time. People were always on the lookout for pleasure, and they indulged themselves in sexual immorality. Ezekiel described Sodom in this way: [Ezekiel 16:49](#) Sodom's sins were pride, gluttony, and laziness, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door.<sup>50</sup> She was proud and committed detestable sins, so I wiped her out, as you have seen. [Ezekiel 16:49-50 NLT](#).

Many people strive for wealth and free time, and this came easy in Sodom. Too much free time is one of the greatest curses that can fall on human beings. It makes them easy prey for Satan's temptations, and all kinds of evil usually follows. The people of Sodom and the surrounding cities were going down the path that led to the destruction of the world by the flood. They openly defied God, ignored His laws, and delighted in acts of violence and sexual perversion.

It was not that long before, that the people of Sodom had been rescued by Abram, and they had the ability to see the bravery, kindness, and generosity of a godly man. Mechizedek had blessed Abram and had given God the credit for his victory. Through these events God was trying to reach them, but He was rejected, and their time for repentance was almost at an end.

As evening approached, the two angels that had been entertained by Abraham, entered Sodom. They appeared like travelers coming to the city to stay for the night. Lot had learned the lesson of hospitality from his uncle, and even though he knew nothing of these strangers, he urged them to spend the night at his house. Who knows if he would have died with the rest of Sodom if he had not shown them kindness. Many have unknowingly shut their doors to God's messengers, who might have brought a blessing to their home.

Sometimes the smallest actions can have an impact for good or evil, and they show what a person's character is like. God is pleased when we cheerfully perform small, unimportant tasks, that have a positive impact on ourselves and others. By forgetting our own desires, and doing things for the benefit of others, we can bring blessings into our own lives.

Knowing how the people of Sodom treated strangers, Lot had made a practice of protecting them by taking them into his home. He was sitting at the gate of the city when the strangers arrived, and he immediately got up to greet them, and invited them to his house. [Genesis 19:2](#) "My lords," he said, "come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again." "Oh no," they replied. "We'll just spend the night out here in the city square." <sup>3</sup> But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. [Genesis 19:2-3 NLT](#).

Later that night, a large crowd of men, both young and old, from all parts of the city gathered outside Lot's house. They intended to do to these strangers what they normally did to visitors to their city. They pounded on the door and demanded that Lot bring the strangers out so they could sexually assault them. Lot stepped outside, closing the door behind him, and tried to reason with the mob. But it only made them angrier, and they would have torn him apart if the angels had not rescued him. They pulled him back into the house and then struck the wicked men with blindness. But even that miraculous sign didn't turn them away and they even tried to find the door by feel. This incident clearly showed the wickedness for which the people of the valley were condemned to death.

Then the angels let Lot know who they were and the purpose of their visit. They told him to gather his family and flee from the city before it was destroyed. Lot went to the homes of his married daughters and told them that the city was going to be destroyed and that they needed to leave immediately. But his son-in-laws and even his daughters treated him as a joker and refused to believe it. Finally, he gave up and went back home where the angels were waiting with his wife and two unmarried daughters. Not wanting to leave his married daughters, their possessions, and the comforts of their home, they lingered. If the angels had not grabbed their hands and dragged them out of the city, they would have died. Once outside, the angels gave them specific instructions to run to the mountains and not to look back.

Lot couldn't bear the thought of trying to survive in the mountains and asked the angels if they could flee to another city. The city of Zoar was a small city that was also supposed to be destroyed because of its wickedness, but at Lot's request the angels agreed to spare that city so he could flee there. As they ran, Lot's wife disobeyed and turned back to look at the home and family they were leaving behind, and instantly she was turned into a pillar of salt. If Lot had immediately obeyed, rather than negotiating with the angels, his wife might have taken their command more seriously and not looked back.

There are Christians who say they do not want to be saved if their spouse and children are not saved with them. They feel they could not bear to be in heaven without their loved ones. But they do not think about the infinite price that was paid for their salvation, and how they are depriving Jesus of the loved one He died to save.

The sun had risen when Lot entered Zoar, then fire and brimstone came down from heaven and destroyed Sodom and the other wicked cities that had received the death sentence. [The word brimstone is used 14 times in the Bible, and in the New Testament is mostly associated with plagues or the final destruction of Satan and sinners in the lake of fire and brimstone. It could probably be thought of as burning stone or lava.] In fact, the valley, that Lot thought must have been like the Garden of Eden, was cursed to be desolate and never rebuilt again.

The lesson of the destruction of Sodom is that mercy and love have limits, beyond which judgment will be executed. But when Jesus was on earth, he said there were greater sins than what Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for. [Matthew 10:14](#) If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day. [Matthew 10:14-15 NLT](#). But even greater still is the sin of claiming to be a Christian and misrepresenting Christ in words and actions. [Revelation 2:4](#) "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! <sup>5</sup> Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. [Revelation 2:4-5 NLT](#). God is always willing to receive the repentant sinner, no matter how bad they have been. Return to Me, and I will return to you," [[Malachi 3:7](#)].

The Christian world today is guilty of denying or even rejecting teachings of the Bible. [Matthew 15:9](#) Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God." [Matthew 15:9 NLT](#). God wishes for His faithful followers to separate themselves from their churches, even as Noah and Lot were separated from the wickedness that surrounded them. [Revelation 17:18](#) And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world." [Revelation 17:18 NLT](#). This woman is the corrupt Christian church, and God calls His people to come out of her. [Revelation 18:4](#) Then I heard another voice calling from heaven, "Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her. [Revelation 18:4 NLT](#).

Lot and his daughters went to Zoar, but ultimately, he was afraid and left to go live in a cave in the mountains. But the immoral influences of the cities followed them

when the daughters of Lot came up with a plan to have children, using their father. Lot's descendants were the Moabites and the Ammonites who were evil and idolatrous enemies of God's people. Lot had fallen far from when he had worshipped at the same altar with Abraham. When he chose Sodom, he essentially chose the friends who would influence his children, and even though the Bible says he remained a just man, he ended up losing everything except 2 daughters.

[Proverbs 23:4](#) Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. [Proverbs 23:4 NLT](#). [Proverbs 15:27](#) Greed brings grief to the whole family, but those who hate bribes will live. [Proverbs 15:27 NLT](#). [1 Timothy 6:9](#) But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. [1 Timothy 6:9 NLT](#).

Many have made the same mistake that Lot did and ended up with similar results. When choosing a place to live, it would be wise to think about the influences on the family. There are times when God calls someone to service and they must be extra careful to protect themselves and their family from evil influences, but when choosing for yourself, why would you needlessly put your family at risk.

Ultimately God doesn't want His children to have to worry about surrounding influences where they live, but they may have to wait to inherit the land promised to them. God did promise Abraham that his descendants would occupy the entire land of Canaan, but neither he nor his son would experience the fulfillment of that promise. But even when the Israelites occupied the entire land, that was not the final promise God made to His people. The fulfillment of the final promise may seem delayed, but time for us is different than it is for God. [2 Peter 3:8](#) But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. [2 Peter 3:8 NLT](#). [Habakkuk 2:3](#) This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed. [Habakkuk 2:3 NLT](#).

The ultimate promise is not just for Abraham's descendants. [Galatians 3:29](#) And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you. [Galatians 3:29 NLT](#). And the promise is not just the land of Canaan, but the entire world, free from the curse of sin. [Daniel 7:27](#) Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey him." [Daniel 7:27 NLT](#). [Psalm 37:11](#) The lowly will possess the land and will live in peace and prosperity. [Psalm 37:11 NLT](#).

Of Abraham it was said: [Hebrews 11:9](#) And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith--for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. [Hebrews 11:9-10 NLT](#). And of many other's it was said: [Hebrews 11:13](#) All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ... <sup>16</sup> But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. [Hebrews 11:13, 16 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 15—The Marriage of Isaac*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 24](#).

Abraham was about 140 years old and thought he was going to die soon [Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 [[Genesis 21:5](#)], and married when he was 40 [[Genesis 25:20](#)]]. Isaac had followed his father in loving and obeying God, but Abraham saw that his personality was gentle and compromising. Abraham feared that if he was married to someone who didn't share his beliefs, he might sacrifice his principles to have peace and harmony in his family.

In ancient times it was not uncommon for parents to make marriage arrangements for their children, and in Abraham's household it was the usual practice. Children were not forced to marry someone they could not love, but they were expected to yield to their parents' judgment and advice. It was a great dishonor to their parents to go against their will in selecting a marriage partner.

Abraham thought of the family he had left behind in Mesopotamia, and though they were not free of idolatry, they did acknowledge and worship the true God. He was not willing to send Isaac, and risk him staying there, if his choice for a wife didn't want to come back to Canaan with him. He was too old to make the journey, so he decided to send his oldest and most trustworthy servant, who was like a son to him. He was advised to try to find the family of his brother Nahor and see if he could find someone suitable who would be willing to come back with him to become Isaac's wife.

Eliezar, who also shared in Abraham's belief and worship of the true God, took 10 camels, and immediately left on his journey. When he arrived at the city of Nahor, he stopped near the city well, which is where he knew the women of the city would be coming to get water. He knew the task given to him by Abraham was a huge responsibility, that would affect future generations, so he prayed to God for help. Knowing how kind and hospitable his master was, he decided on a sign, that if he should ask a young lady for a drink and she offered to get water for his 10 camels, she would be the one God chose for Isaac.

He had barely finished his prayer, when he noticed a beautiful, unmarried young woman coming to the well. So, he approached her and asked if he could have a drink of water. She cheerfully gave him water and immediately offered to get water for all his camels. When she finished, Eliezar gave her some very valuable gifts and jewelry and asked who her family was, and whether they had a place he could stay. She answered, the daughter of Bethuel and Milcah, and granddaughter of Nahor, and they had a room for him and food for his camels.

Then Eliezar told her who he was and that he was on a mission for her relative Abraham, and she immediately ran home to tell her family who she had met at the well. Eliezar was amazed at how completely God had led and answered his prayer. [Genesis 24:27](#) "Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham," he said. "The LORD has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives." [Genesis 24:27 NLT](#).

When Rebekah's brother Laban saw the jewelry and gold, and heard his sister's story, he immediately went to the well to bring the wealthy stranger home. When Eliezar arrived, his camels were taken care of, and his feet were washed, and food was brought to him. But he was so excited that he refused to eat anything until he could tell them what his mission was and how God had answered his prayer. When Rebekah's parents and brother heard the whole story, they said this was obviously an answer to prayer, and they immediately agreed to let her become Isaac's wife. With the approval of her parents, she was asked if she would go along with this, and she answered yes.

Eliezar was so excited to get home that the very next morning, he was ready to leave. Rebekah's parents said, let us spend a little more time with our daughter before we send her away. But when Eliezar continued to show his desire to leave immediately, they asked Rebekah if she was ready to go right away, and she said, "I will go." [[Genesis 24:58](#)].

Expecting the return of Eliezar from Haran, Isaac had returned from where he was tending the flocks. He was out in the field meditating when he saw the camels in the distance. When Rebekah saw the man in the field, she asked Eliezar if it was Isaac, and when he said yes, she covered her face with a veil. When they met, Eliezar told Isaac everything that happened, and Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother's tent and married her, and he loved her and was comforted after his mother's death.

Abraham considered the selection of a good wife for Isaac as one of the most important things he could do for him at this stage of life. He was aware of the influence a wife and mother had. He had seen firsthand the effect Lot's wife had on him. It was she who had encouraged him to separate from Abraham, and if not for her Lot would have left Sodom. If he had not been strongly rooted in the things he learned from Abraham early in his life, she would have led him to reject God. Even still the effect of Lot's wife on the family resulted in heathen nations that brought evil to the world for many generations.

Even closer still was the example of Abraham's marriage to Hagar, which led to jealousy and bitterness between his wives, and children. Abraham had taught Ishmael until he was a teenager, but the selection of heathen wives by his mother

influenced him and his descendants. They grew into a great and powerful nation that would be great enemies of the descendants of Isaac.

One who loves and fears God, cannot marry one who doesn't without putting himself in great danger. [Amos 3:3](#) Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction? [Amos 3:3 NLT](#). [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? [2 Corinthians 6:14 NLT](#). True happiness in the family can only exist if there is unity. If there are great differences, often the godly partner will be led to compromise their standards and beliefs to keep peace in the family. There are times when someone is converted after they were married, and they should honor their marriage vows, but faithfulness to God should always take priority over every human relationship. That faithfulness can sometimes convert the unbelieving partner.

When Isaac was 40 years old, he was still willing to allow his father to be responsible for the selection of a wife for him. Too many young people today, even those who are Christians, do not ask for any advice when choosing a spouse. They think they are able to make this important choice, with little to no life experience, and before they have even fully reached maturity. For many, a few years of marriage shows them their error, but not before there are lifelong consequences for children.

True love is a holy principle and is not the same as being infatuated with someone's looks or popularity. Parents should train their children to be pure, kind, courteous, and to practice self-denial, but they should also be living examples of this lifestyle. They should also give them a happy home, filled with love, and one that their children would like to duplicate. This is worth much more to them than land and money. If they consistently do this, their children should attract and befriend those who also share their characteristics and lifestyle.

## *Chapter 16—Jacob and Esau*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 25:19-24; 27](#).

Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Their natural character traits were very different, and before they were born, an angel revealed that they would each become the father of a nation. The angel also said that one nation would be stronger, and the nation descended from the first born would serve the other.

Esau lived for the day and did what made him happy. He was fearless and loved the excitement of hunting, and perhaps the quiet peace-loving father was attracted to the opposite characteristics of his older son. Esau would return home with wild game for his father and spend time with him telling exciting stories of the hunt. Jacob, on the other hand, was patient, quiet, careful, and thought more about the future. He stayed close to home and took more interest in taking care of the flocks and growing food in the garden. He was his mother's favorite.

Isaac and Rebekah carried the legacy of the knowledge of God and the promise to Abraham. Esau and Jacob had both been taught the importance of carrying on this legacy in their own household. They were taught that the firstborn had a special responsibility to be the spiritual leader of the family and would also receive a greater share of the inheritance when they took over for their father as head of the household. They were also taught about the Redeemer of the world who would one day come from their descendants. It was a big responsibility and required obedience to God and his commandments.

From a young age, Isaac had taught his sons these things, and made it clear that Esau, as the firstborn, was to receive the birthright blessing and responsibilities. But Esau didn't care about religious things, and these responsibilities and restrictions made him feel like a slave. He did desire the wealth, but he also wanted freedom from the laws of God. Rebekah thought about the words of the angel and became convinced that Jacob should receive the birthright blessing. She talked to Isaac about it, but he was completely set on following the custom of giving the birthright blessing to the oldest.

Jacob and his mother had talked about the birthright blessing in private and unlike Esau, he greatly desired it, and it wasn't just the wealth that appealed to him. Jacob had learned about the spiritual blessings and responsibilities, and desired them, even though he had not had any personal experience with God yet. Jacob thought the only way to have this relationship with God was by getting the birthright blessing. As a result, he was constantly looking for an opportunity to secure the blessing for himself.

One day Esau came home from a hunt tired and very hungry and asked Jacob for some of the food he was cooking. Jacob immediately saw an opportunity and offered to give him food in exchange for the birthright. Esau, in his usual reckless, self-indulgent manner, said, "what good will the birthright be to me if I die of hunger?" So, for a bowl of red lentil stew, he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. Esau could obviously have found some food elsewhere, but since he cared nothing for the birthright anyway, why not get rid of it. How many today do the same when they sell their heavenly inheritance, for earthly pleasures.

Now Heth was a son of Canaan, the son of Ham, and his descendants shared the land with Abraham and his descendants. So, Esau, against the wishes of his parents took two wives of the daughters of Heth. This violated the covenant God had made with Abraham, that the chosen people should not marry idolaters. Rebekah used this to try to convince Isaac that Jacob should receive the birthright blessing, but strangely he continued to be determined that Esau should receive it.

As Isaac got older, he became blind, and thought he would die soon, so he decided to go ahead and give the birthright blessing to Esau. [Jacob was born when Isaac was 60. Using the following verses, [Genesis 41:46](#), [Genesis 45:6](#), [Genesis 47:9](#), and counting back from Jacob's age when he went to Egypt, he was about 77 at this time, which would have made Isaac about 137.] But since he knew Rebekah and Jacob were opposed to this, he decided to do it in secret. He told Esau, "Go hunt for a deer and make some venison the way I like it, and then I will bless you before I die."

Rebekah or one of her servants must have been snooping on Isaac, because she immediately learned of the plan. She quickly went and found Jacob and told him what was happening, and what they had to do before it was too late. He had to go in before his blind father, pretending to be Esau, and secure the blessing for himself. Jacob was not at all happy at the thought of deceiving his father, and worried that if he was caught, he would be cursed instead. But he wanted the blessing so bad, he agreed to go ahead with his mother's plan.

Rebekah cooked a goat the way Isaac liked, and dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes, and even put the goat skin on Jacob's smooth arms and neck. Jacob had not intended to directly lie to his father, but when he was asked if he was Esau, he couldn't avoid it, if he didn't want to be caught. Isaac was suspicious when he heard Jacob's imitation of Esau's voice but when he felt that he was not smooth skinned and smelled the clothes, he was convinced.

Jacob had barely left his father's tent when Esau returned and announced his presence. He didn't care that he had sold his birthright and was willing to take it back if his father insisted. Even though he cared nothing for the spiritual aspect of

the birthright he wanted the double portion of his father's wealth, and he would officially be the head of the entire household. He said, "Let my father eat the venison I prepared and bless me." Isaac began to tremble, realizing what had just happened. Even though Jacob had deceived him, he realized it was really the will of God, and he knew Jacob was much better suited to lead the household spiritually. So, even though he thought he was blessing Esau, Isaac said, "I have blessed your brother Jacob, and he shall be blessed."

Jacob and Rebekah succeeded, but at a great cost. Esau threatened to kill Jacob, who had to flee for his life, and Jacob and Rebekah would never see each other again. They should have trusted God to accomplish things in His own way. They superstitiously believed the blessing ritual was needed to be the recipient of the promise to Abraham. Many claim to be followers of God but are constantly trying to do things according to their own plan. Both Rebekah and Jacob repented for their actions, but it took many years for Jacob to finally be free of the guilt of what he did.

Earlier in his life, Esau didn't care much about the birthright blessing, but now that it was gone, he really wanted it. Now he was sad, and angry at the same time, and said, bless me also, father, haven't you saved any blessing for me? The fact that Esau lost out on the birthright, didn't mean he was cut off from God. He could still choose to follow, obey, and receive forgiveness of his sins from God. But he did not repent or seek forgiveness. [Hebrews 12:17](#) You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears. [Hebrews 12:17 NLT](#).

Esau is given as an example in the Bible of people who do not place any value on the sacrifice of Christ for their salvation. They care only for the present, and earthly treasures. There are people who claim to be followers of God, but when bad habits or sins are brought to their attention, that they should change or give up, they are offended and unwilling. If they realize that they cannot continue doing these harmful actions, and keep their hope of eternal life, they choose their earthly pleasures over heaven.

## *Chapter 17—Jacob's Flight and Exile*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 28-31](#).

Esau threatened to kill Jacob as soon as their father died and not knowing that Isaac would live for many years, but Rebekah thought that Jacob had better leave to save his life. Isaac and Rebekah both agreed that it would be better for Jacob to look for a wife from his mother's family in Mesopotamia, rather than marry someone locally, so they sent him away. Even though he had his father's blessing and was even being sent for the purpose of finding a wife, Jacob was sad and had a deep sense of guilt. He was completely alone, unlike when Eliezar travelled to Mesopotamia nearly 100 years before with a caravan of 10 camels. Satan was very near to him constantly reminding him of his guilt for his great deception. Jacob feared that he had completely lost the blessing he was hoping to get from God.

On the evening of his second day away from home, he still felt hopeless as the darkness of night settled on him. He hardly dared to pray but was so lonely and in need of comfort. With deep humility he confessed his sin again and asked if he might get some sign that God had forgiven him. He didn't feel any better, but weary from traveling, he chose a stone as a pillow and laid down to sleep. During the night, he had a dream of a bright shining ladder, that extended from him all the way to heaven. Angels were going up and down the ladder, and at the top was God himself. Then he heard the voice of God repeat the promise given years before, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and through you and your descendants, all the families of the earth will be blessed." Jacob was promised that the very ground that he was sleeping on would belong to his descendants. Then God had more words of encouragement for him, "I am with you, and will continue to be with you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will never leave you and will do everything I have promised for you."

Unlike being in the great household of Abraham, and his father Isaac, where worship of God was the usual practice, he would be alone among people who worshipped idols. He would be starting his own household and would need to resist temptations to conform to the ways of those around him. Years later referring to the story of Jacob's ladder, Jesus said to Nathanael, [John 1:51](#) Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth." [John 1:51 NLT](#). Originally, God spoke face to face with Adam and Eve, but after sin, He would not be able to communicate so openly with humanity. But God would still communicate to us through Jesus, who would be the ladder, as He said to Nathanael, upon which angels would come and go from God to us. Jesus

connects human beings who are weak and helpless with an infinite source of power.

Jacob woke up from the dream, and it was still dark, but now that he knew God was with him, everything felt different. He said, "Surely God is in this place, and I didn't even know it when I laid down to sleep. This is the house of God and the gate to heaven." When he woke up again in the morning, he set up the stone as a pillar, and poured oil on it, and he called the place Bethel, which meant, "House of God." The stone would mark this spot, and whenever he would pass this way again, he would stop and worship God. Then Jacob made a vow, "If God will be with me, and keep me clothed and fed, and bring me back to my father in peace, then He will be my God, and this pillar will be His house, and I will give a tenth of everything I get to Him."

Jacob was not bargaining with God, but this experience made God personal to him, and made the God of his fathers, his own. Jacob was so grateful for the promise of blessings from God to him personally that his heart overflowed with thankfulness. We should also be grateful and thankful for the blessings of God in our lives and give back to Him a portion of what He gave to us. [Psalm 116:12](#) What can I offer the LORD for all he has done for me? [Psalm 116:12 NLT](#). It is not just a portion of what we earn, but time, talents, and even property, that can be dedicated to Him who gave us these things in the first place.

With new faith in the promises, protection, and presence of God, Jacob continued his journey to the East. When he arrived, like Eliezar nearly 100 years before, he went to the well. It was there that he met and immediately fell in love with Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother. Jacob now offered the service that Rebekah had performed many years before, when he moved the stone that covered the well and drew up water for all of Rachel's sheep. When Laban learned that his nephew had arrived, he welcomed him into his home. Jacob informed Laban of the purpose of his arrival, and of his desire to marry Rachel, so it was agreed that he would work for 7 years as a dowry, so he could marry her.

It was customary in those days that the groom would pay a dowry of money or land to the father of the bride. This proved to the father that the man would be able to provide for his future wife. In cases like this where the man had no money, he could prove his worth by laboring a certain amount of time as the dowry. The dowry was really intended to be given to the daughter, but Laban selfishly kept it all for himself. The method of laboring to pay the dowry had some other benefits, by preventing too short of an engagement, and giving time for the man to demonstrate his love. Wives could benefit today from a similar show of

commitment from a man, before devoting their life and that of their future children to his care.

The Bible says that because of the love Jacob had for Rachel, the 7 years of labor passed quickly. When the time was completed and Laban realized he would be losing Jacob's free labor, he selfishly came up with a plan to keep Jacob working for him. Caring nothing for his daughter's or Jacob's happiness, he secretly gave Rachel's older sister Leah to him on the wedding night. Obviously, Jacob was angry, but Laban was ready with an answer. If he promised not to divorce Leah, he could still marry Rachel if he agreed to work another 7 years for her. Of course, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and this naturally caused jealousy between the sisters.

When Jacob had completed the second 7 years of labor for Rachel, he informed Laban that he wanted to return home. But Laban said, please stay, I have learned that God has blessed me because of you. Tell me what you want me to pay, and I will give it to you, just don't leave me now. Jacob reminded Laban that the few sheep he had 14 years before had now turned into a huge flock. So, Laban paid Jacob out of his flock, and Jacob continued working for him. During the next 6 years, Laban changed Jacob's wages 10 times, always trying to pay as little as possible. For 20 years, Jacob worked for Laban, and the flocks and herds thrived under his care. This is how Jacob described his time working for Laban, [Genesis 31:38](#) "For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. <sup>39</sup> If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night. <sup>40</sup> "I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. <sup>41</sup> Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! [Genesis 31:38-41 NLT](#).

A good shepherd tenderly cared for his flock, 24 hours a day, regardless of whether it was hot, cold, raining, or snowing. He would risk his life, protecting them from thieves, and predators, and he was responsible to the owner for each one that was lost. This caring relationship is used in the Bible to describe Christ's relationship to His people. [Ezekiel 34:16](#) I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bandage the injured and strengthen the weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will feed them, yes--feed them justice! ... <sup>22</sup> So I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be abused. I will judge between one animal of the flock and another. ... <sup>28</sup> They will no longer be

prey for other nations, and wild animals will no longer devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will frighten them. [Ezekiel 34:16, 22, 28 NLT](#). [John 10:4](#) After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice." [John 10:4-5 NLT](#).

Jesus said, [John 10:11](#) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. <sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep. <sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, [John 10:11-14 NLT](#).

Christ did give up His own life to save His sheep and now has trusted the care of the flock to pastors, who are the hired help. Some are good, but some don't care about the best interests of the flock, only trying to enrich themselves, and those flee at the sight of danger. To the shepherds serving under Christ, Peter wrote: [1 Peter 5:2](#) Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly--not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. <sup>3</sup> Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. [1 Peter 5:2-3 NLT](#). And Paul said, [Acts 20:28](#) "So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock--his church, purchased with his own blood--over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. <sup>29</sup> I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. [Acts 20:28-29 NLT](#). Those who were faithful will receive a reward, [1 Peter 5:4](#) And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor. [1 Peter 5:4 NLT](#).

Over time, Laban and his sons noticed that their flocks were not growing as much as they had been, but Jacob's were, and they became jealous. And Jacob became wealthy with lots of sheep, cattle, camels, donkeys, and even many servants working for his household. Now Laban's sons began complaining that all their former wealth was being transferred to Jacob.

Jacob began to get worried about what Laban and his sons would do to him and wanted to leave. In fact, he would have left long before if he wasn't so worried about what Esau might do to him when he returned. It seemed that danger would threaten his family whether he stayed or left, so in great distress, he took his problem to God. In a dream, God said to him, "Return to the land of your fathers, and I will be with you."

Worried that Laban wouldn't let him leave with all his animals, he waited for the right opportunity. When Laban and his sons were away, shearing their sheep, Jacob saw his chance and quickly packed up and left. Laban found out 3 days later and quickly gathered some armed men to chase after Jacob with the intention of forcing him to return. But the night before he caught up with Jacob, God appeared to him in a dream and warned him that he should not argue with Jacob or try offer him good reasons to return. Laban never gave his daughters any benefit from the dowry he collected for them, and he was always trying to pay Jacob as little as possible, but now he asks why they left secretly. He said that he never had the opportunity to say goodbye to his daughters and grandchildren, or to have a going-away party for them.

In response to Laban's fake kindness and acting hurt, Jacob reminded him of how he had been treated. I worked like a slave for 14 years for your two daughters, and then I worked 6 years for sheep and goats, and you changed my wages 10 times. If the God of my fathers had not blessed me, I would have left empty handed. God saw how I was mistreated by you and that's why he warned you last night.

Laban realized that he could not deny what Jacob said, so he said let's make a promise to have peace between our families. They made a large pile of stones and Laban named it Mizpah, which meant watchtower. Then Laban said, may the Lord watch over you and me after we have each gone our own way. May the God of Abraham and Nahor judge us if either of us crosses the river to try to harm the other. After this, there is no record in the Bible of any contact between the children of Abraham, and his relatives in Mesopotamia.

## *Chapter 18—The Night of Wrestling*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 32-33](#).

Jacob was obeying the command of God to leave Laban and return to Canaan, the land of his fathers. But as he retraced his steps in reverse from 20 years ago, he couldn't help but be worried about how he would be received. The sin of his deception against Esau and his father still weighed heavily on him. When he fled his father's house, Esau assumed he would get what he wanted, which was to inherit the wealth of his father. Esau now commanded hundreds of fighting men and could easily carry out his original threat against Jacob.

To give Jacob assurance, two groups of angels accompanied his household, one in front and one in the rear. The Bible doesn't clearly say how he saw them, but I suspect that it was in a dream or vision. This gave him some assurance of God's protection, and he named the place Mahanaim, which means two camps. But Jacob still thought he needed to do something to let Esau know that he was not coming back to take anything away from him. Their mother had been told that the older would serve the younger. Jacob wanted to make it clear to Esau that he was not planning to take over the household. First, he sent a messenger to Esau, specifically calling him lord, and calling himself his servant. He also let him know that he had everything he needed and was not coming back to claim anything but was only hoping to make peace. But the servants returned and simply said that Esau was coming with 400 men.

This worried Jacob and he felt sure that Esau was intent on taking revenge. First, he split his company into two groups so if one was attacked the other might be able to get away. Next, he sent generous gifts to Esau, again, trying to reassure him that he had plenty and was not coming to claim anything. Jacob did what he could, then he humbly took his worries to God in prayer and asked for protection and deliverance from Esau.

At the river Jabbok, Jacob decided to send everyone across the river while he stayed back alone to pray. It was not a safe place where Jacob stayed, because of dangerous animals, and thieves and murderers. In distress, because his entire household was in great danger because of his sin, Jacob poured out his worries to God. Suddenly, in the dark, a strong hand was laid on him, and Jacob assumed that he was being attacked. He immediately fought back, trying to defeat his attacker, but for hours it seemed that neither could gain the upper hand. Finally, as day was breaking, Jacob's opponent touched his thigh and instantly he was in terrible pain. Now he knew that it was not a man he was fighting with, but it was a heavenly being. In fact, it was Christ Himself, "the Angel of the covenant," who had

appeared in human form to Jacob. Now, instead of fighting, Jacob clung on to the heavenly being and begged for a blessing, and assurance that his sin was forgiven. [Hosea 12:4](#) Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won. He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him. There at Bethel he met God face to face, and God spoke to him -- [Hosea 12:4 NLT](#). The Angel said, "Let me go because daylight is coming," but like a child hanging onto a parent, Jacob said, "I will not let go of you until you bless me."

Jacob had obtained the birthright by deception because he didn't trust God. Part of his blessing was that his name was changed from Jacob to Israel, for as a prince he had struggled with God and with men and won. He had now received the blessing he had longed for since he was a young man. Having the assurance that his sin was forgiven lifted such a weight from him. He now no longer feared meeting Esau because he trusted God completely.

While Jacob was wrestling, an angel was sent to Esau in a dream. He saw what his brother had gone through in exile from his father, his sadness that his mother had died, and he also saw the angels that surrounded Jacob's camp. When Esau woke up, he let his soldiers know that their plan had changed and that they would not be attacking Jacob, because the God of Isaac was with him.

When the two brothers met, it was a contrast between a chief, leading 400 men of war, and another, limping, leaning on a staff, followed by wives, children, shepherds, women servants, and many animals. But the face of Jacob radiated joy and peace after his recent encounter with God. Esau ran to his brother, and they embraced and kissed each other and cried. This peaceful meeting with Esau demonstrated to Jacob how useless human effort is in accomplishing God's promise.

Jacob's night of wrestling, the regret for his sins, and the prayer for forgiveness, were used as examples of the experience of God's people just before the second coming of Christ. [Jeremiah 30:5](#) This is what the LORD says: "I hear cries of fear; there is terror and no peace. <sup>6</sup> Now let me ask you a question: Do men give birth to babies? Then why do they stand there, ashen-faced, hands pressed against their sides like a woman in labor? <sup>7</sup> In all history there has never been such a time of terror. It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel. Yet in the end they will be saved! [Jeremiah 30:5-7 NLT](#).

That time of trouble will begin after the work of Christ as our High Priest in heaven is finished. At that time, every person will have made their final decision for or against God. No more sins will be forgiven, as the announcement is made in heaven, [Revelation 22:11](#) Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live

righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy." [Revelation 22:11 NLT](#). Just as Jacob prayed for protection from his brother, the people of God will pray for deliverance from those who are trying to destroy them. Even as Satan kept reminding Jacob of his sin, he will do the same to God's people, trying to get them to believe their sins are too great to be forgiven. Even if they are not delivered immediately, they will, like Jacob, keep praying for deliverance and forgiveness. They will not let go until they finally receive God's blessing.

If Jacob had not repented, God would not have protected him from the consequences of his actions. Now while there is time to repent, Satan will try to get people to believe that God will not care about small sins. But in the time of trouble, he will remind them of their sins, and they will be overwhelmed by fear and will lose their faith. But those who have repented of all their sins like Jacob, though they are surrounded by danger, will feel unworthy but they will trust in the promise of their forgiveness, and God will deliver them. [Luke 18:7](#) Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?" [Luke 18:7-8 NLT](#). But, among those who are lost, those who had more knowledge, talents, and influence, will be more guilty than those who had less.

## ***Chapter 19—The Return to Canaan***

This chapter is based on [Genesis 34-35; 37](#).

Jacob and his family crossed the Jordan into Canaan and set up camp at Shechem. This was the first place that Abraham camped when he arrived in Canaan nearly 200 years before. Like Abraham, Jacob also setup an altar where he could offer sacrifices and worship God with his family every morning and evening. In fact, Jacob intended to stay here for a while because he bought the land and dug a well. 17 centuries later, his descendant, Jesus rested beside this well and told a woman about the living water that He could give her [[John 4:14](#)].

Unfortunately, Jacob's stay in Shechem ended in violence and murder. Dinah, the only named daughter of Jacob, went to hang out with the other daughters of the land, women who didn't worship God. Trying to have fun with those who do not love and worship God, is inviting Satan's temptations. While there she caught the eye of Shechem, son of Hamor, and he raped her. In revenge for what was done to their sister, Simeon and Levi tricked and then murdered all the men of the town. What Shechem did was wrong, but the response was way out of proportion, and Jacob said, you have just given the people of the land a reason to hate us and to destroy us. 50 years later, on his deathbed, Jacob still remembered this evil deed, and cursed their descendants of those two sons for their anger [[Genesis 49:5-7](#)].

Jacob was deeply humiliated that his own sons were so violent and cruel. He was also aware that there was some idol worship going on within his own household. While he was trying to decide what to do, God spoke to him and told him to go to Bethel and build an altar there.

Before he would move his household to that holy place, he was determined to rid his entire camp of idolatry. Jacob told the story of the last time he was at Bethel, alone, and running for his life. He told them of the dream he had, of a ladder to heaven, and angels were going up and down the ladder between him and God. He told them of God's promise to him, and of His continued protection and blessings on their household. Then he asked everyone to bring all their idols, and they buried them under a terebinth tree at Shechem. After that he told everyone to take a bath and to put on clean clothes. Then God was able to protect them, and He caused the people of the land to have a fear of them, so no one tried to hurt them for the slaughter at Shechem.

When they arrived at Bethel, Jacob set up an altar as God had instructed. And God appeared to Jacob again and renewed His promise to him and reminded him that his name had been changed to Israel. When he was at Bethel, the Bible says that Deborah, his mother's faithful companion, and nurse, who had been with her since

before they left Mesopotamia, died. It seems like he had brought her to his household since his mother was dead on his return to Canaan. This aged woman was a connection to his early childhood, and to his beloved mother, whom she had served so faithfully. It was with great sadness and weeping that she was remembered and buried under a terebinth tree in Bethel.

After they left Bethel, Rachel went into labor for her second child. The birth was very difficult, and Rachel died, but the child lived. Just before she died, Rachel named her son Benoni, meaning "son of my sorrow." But Jacob changed his name to Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand," or "my strength." Jacob had worked 14 years for the privilege of marrying her, and now he was heartbroken. Years later, on his deathbed, he recalled this sad occasion, [Genesis 48:7](#) "Long ago, as I was returning from Paddan-aram, Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, some distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath." [Genesis 48:7 NLT](#).

Jacob's journey finally came to an end when he arrived at Mamre, or Hebron, where Abraham was buried, and his father Isaac still lived. He was a great comfort to his father in the last years of his life. When he died, about 20 years later, the two brothers met again to bury their father, which would have been the occasion Jacob feared for his life. But he was content with the spiritual blessings of the birthright and gladly gave his brother the double portion of their father's wealth. The great wealth of the two brothers, especially the animals, made it impossible for them to live together. This was really for the better anyway, because the religious faith of the two brothers was so different.

It was Esau's choice, and not God's that he lost out on the gift of salvation, which God makes freely available to all whether they are the first born or not. It is through obedience to His commands, and faith in Christ, that any can receive the gift of salvation. [John 3:36](#) And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment." [John 3:36 NLT](#). [Matthew 7:21](#) "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. [Matthew 7:21 NLT](#). [Revelation 22:14](#) Blessed [are] those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. [Revelation 22:14 NKJV](#).

Jacob had learned his lessons from the mistakes early in his life and now trusted God entirely. His undesirable character traits were burned up in the furnace of trial and faith, and he was refined like pure gold. Finally, the faith of his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac, was also fully present in him. But unfortunately, the

mistakes of his early life continued to cause hardship and grief for him, through the character and lives of his sons. One of the results of having multiple wives, especially when one is clearly favored above the others, is competition and jealousy. This was the case among Jacob's wives and was carried on through their children.

One of Jacob's 12 sons had a very different character than the others. Joseph, the first son of his beloved Rachel, listened to his father and learned to love and obey God. His character was pure, his mind active, and his faithfulness to principle was unbreakable. In addition to the fact that Joseph was the first-born son of his favorite wife, these characteristics, and the fact that he returned his father's love and affection, made it easier for Jacob to favor him over the others. This favoritism would end up making the brothers jealous and they made Joseph's life difficult because of it.

To make matters worse, when Joseph saw his brother doing bad things, he tried to stop them, and when that didn't work, he told his father about it. On one occasion, Jacob gave Joseph a coat, like one worn by rich and powerful people. This made the older brothers think that their father intended to pass all the older sons and give the birthright to nearly the youngest among them, making him richer than the rest, and giving him authority over them. But if that wasn't enough already, Joseph told them about two dreams he had, that clearly indicated that first the 11 brothers, and then their mothers and even their father would all bow down to him. The older brothers hated Joseph the way Cain hated his brother Abel.

Now Jacob's older sons were responsible for the animals, and because there were so many, they had to move them from one place to another, to find enough grass for them to eat. Once when they went to use the land Jacob had bought in Shechem, they had moved on from there without updating their father about where they went. Jacob was beginning to get worried, considering the cruelty of Simeon and Levi to the people there, so not knowing the true feeling of his sons toward Joseph, he sent him to find out where they were and how they were doing.

Joseph, also unaware of how much his brothers hated him, was happy to obey his father and go in search of them. After a lonely, 50-mile walk, Joseph arrived at Shechem, but his brothers were not there. After asking around, he discovered they had gone to Dothan, so he continued walking for 15 more miles. When he finally saw his brothers in the distance, he was happy that he would be able to tell his father that they were ok.

But when the brothers saw that fancy coat in the distance, they recognized their hated brother immediately. Even in their announcement to the others of his arrival, they made fun of him saying, "look, the dreamer is coming." Realizing how far

away from father they were, they began thinking of ways to get rid of him. "Let's kill him and throw him in a pit, and we will tell father a wild animal killed him. That will take care of those ridiculous dreams of his." They might have settled on those plans, but Reuben was not in favor of murdering their brother, so he suggested throwing him in a pit, secretly intending to release him later.

When Joseph arrived, they grabbed him roughly and took his coat and threw him into a deep pit that he couldn't climb out of. As they sat down to eat, some of the brothers didn't feel so good about how they had treated their brother. But the cruelest among them still intended to be rid of him, and when they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites, they came up with the idea of selling him. This way they would be rid of him and would not be guilty of killing their own brother. When they pulled Joseph out of the pit, and he began to realize what was happening, he pleaded with them not to do it. Some felt bad about it but knew they had gone too far to stop, because if Joseph were allowed to go back home, he would tell their father about what had happened. So, without Reuben, the oldest, there to stop them, they sold him to the Ishmaelites.

When Reuben secretly returned to the pit to release Joseph, he found it empty, and ran to his brothers and said, "he's gone, what am I going to do now." Now, all the brothers had to have the same story to give their father, so they killed a goat and put its blood on Joseph's coat. When they eventually got home, they told their father that they found this coat in the field, and thought it looked like Joseph's, so they brought it to him. They were not looking forward to breaking this news to their father, but they were not prepared for the terrible sadness that it caused him. He said, "It is my sons coat, and a wild animal must have killed and eaten him." They tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, and tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and said, "I will never stop crying for my son until the day I die." The brothers were scared about what they had done to their father, but they were more scared to tell him the truth, so they kept their secret even though it made them feel guilty.

## *Chapter 20—Joseph in Egypt*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 39-41](#).

As Joseph was carried south by the Ishmaelite caravan, he must have seen in the distance the hills where his father lived. He thought of how his father would handle this and how lonely and sad he would be. He cried for his father, but also for himself and what lay ahead for him. He wondered how his brothers could have hated him so much, and finally, what would become of him. Joseph must have cried until he couldn't cry anymore.

When Joseph had run out of tears, he must have begun to realize how the special treatment he received from his father had contributed to his brother's hatred toward him. While it may have been enjoyable, being treated as the favorite son was not good training for adulthood. Now he realized how different and difficult his life would be as a slave instead of the favorite son.

Eventually his thoughts turned to the God of his father. He had listened to the stories his father told of the times God had appeared to him, and spoke to him, and of the promises God had made to him. He remembered what his father told him about God's love for all humanity, and His plan to save them from sin. He especially thought of the time his father had to flee from home, alone and afraid for his life, and how God had comforted him. Joseph then decided that his father's God would also be his God and prayed that He would be with him wherever he ended up. This gave him new hope, and now no matter where he was or who he was serving, his first allegiance would be to the God of heaven.

When the Ishmaelite caravan arrived in Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of the king's guard. Egypt had wealth, and culture, and was a highly civilized nation, and Joseph was exposed to idolatry and false gods everywhere. Yet he remained faithful to God, and his Egyptian master. He was not ashamed of the God of his fathers and did not try to hide the fact that he was a worshipper of Jehovah.

Joseph performed every task well, and he was successful at everything he did. His master noticed and knew that Joseph gave credit to his God for his success. This was not just a miraculous type of success that Joseph experienced, but it was the result of his intelligence, hard work, and attention to detail, topped off with God's blessing. As Potiphar gained confidence and trust in Joseph, he gave him more and more responsibility, and soon Joseph was completely in charge of the entire household, and even all his money. Potiphar boasted that Joseph was in charge of everything, and he didn't even know what he owned except the bread that he ate. Through it all, Joseph continued to openly worship God, and God was glorified by Joseph's success and faithfulness. This is how God should be represented by all

His followers, so that He can be known and respected everywhere in the world, even in the middle of heathen nations.

Potiphar began to treat Joseph like a son rather than a slave, and he was educated in science, languages, and politics, and was introduced to important people in the kingdom. In this way God was preparing Joseph for his future as the prime minister of the country of Egypt. But first Joseph's faith and integrity would be severely tested.

Potiphar's wife began dreaming of having an affair with Joseph and started trying to tempt him to sleep with her. So far, he had remained faithful to God amid idolatry, but now he was being tempted by a beautiful woman, who had the authority to command him and reward him, but also to ruin him if he disobeyed her. How would Joseph remain faithful to God and Potiphar, and not be ruined by an angry, rejected woman? Joseph's first thought was of his faithfulness to God, and he said to her, "How can I do this great wickedness against God?" If we kept in mind that everything we say and do is written in heaven, it might make us think twice before sinning.

Joseph chose the path of faithfulness to God and to Potiphar and suffered greatly for it. That rejected woman got revenge on Joseph, by falsely accusing him of trying to do to her what she actually desired. When Potiphar heard his wife's accusation, he was angry and threw Joseph into prison. But he was not angry at Joseph, because he knew that he would not have done what his wife accused him of. He was angry at his wife for her unfaithfulness, and most of all that he was forced to take action against Joseph, who was like a son to him, and the most faithful and trusted person in his household.

In prison, Joseph was treated like an evil criminal, with his ankles being painfully bound with chains. [Psalm 105:18](#) They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. <sup>19</sup> Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph's character. [Psalm 105:18-19 NLT](#). But even as cream rises to the top when milk is churned into butter, Joseph's character again caused him to rise to the top, even while he was still a prisoner. [Genesis 39:22](#) Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. <sup>23</sup> The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed. [Genesis 39:22-23 NLT](#).

On one occasion as Joseph was caring for the prisoners, he noticed Pharaoh's chief baker, and cup bearer, who had been thrown into prison, were troubled about something. When he learned that they both had dreams the night before, and were wondering what they meant, Joseph said, "Tell me your dreams and God will tell

me if they mean something." When he heard the dreams, God immediately revealed the interpretations to him and Joseph told the butler that in 3 days he would once again be the king's wine taster and cup bearer, but to the baker, in 3 days he would be killed by the king's command. When the cup bearer thanked him for the good interpretation, Joseph saw this as an opportunity to appeal his case to the king. He asked the cup bearer that once he was serving the king again, to please tell the king about him, that he was a Hebrew who was sold as a slave, and then in Egypt, falsely accused and thrown into prison. But when the cup bearer was restored to his position, he forgot all about Joseph.

One night the king of Egypt had 2 dreams that seemed that they had some important meaning. He asked the magicians and wise men in his service what they thought they might mean, and they could offer no good interpretation. As the king grew more upset that no one was able to give him an interpretation of the dreams, the cup bearer suddenly remembered Joseph. He then went and told the king about his experience in prison, when he had a dream, and it was correctly interpreted by a prisoner. It was humbling to ask a foreigner, slave, and criminal for help, but the king was desperate and would take help of any kind if it could set his mind at ease. Joseph was immediately called up from prison to appear before the king.

When Joseph stood before him, Pharaoh said, "I had a dream last night and no one has been able to give me an interpretation of what it means. I have been told that you can interpret dreams." But Joseph immediately said that it was not his own ability but said that God could provide the answer the king was looking for. So, Pharaoh immediately told Joseph what he saw in his dreams.

"I stood on the riverbank and saw 7 very healthy-looking cows come out of it, and they just started grazing on the grass. But they were followed out of the river by 7 cows that looked like they were starving to death, but when they came out of the water, they ate up the healthy-looking cows, but they still looked like they were starving. Then I woke up, but when I went back to sleep, I had another dream, where I saw 7 ears of corn on a single plant, and they looked full and good. But they were followed by 7 more ears of corn, that looked dry and withered, and they consumed the good ears of corn, and still looked withered. I told these dreams to my magicians, and no one could give me an interpretation."

Joseph said, "God is showing you what is going to happen in the future, and both dreams have the same interpretation. There will be 7 years when the harvests will be better than usual, but they will be followed by 7 years of famine, when hardly anything will grow. The two dreams mean that this will happen right away." But Joseph didn't stop there, he immediately showed the wisdom he used in managing Potiphar's household, with the following advice. "Let Pharaoh select a wise and

honest man and put him in charge of collecting 20% of all the harvests in Egypt during the 7 years of plenty. He should store them up for use during the 7 years of famine that will follow."

Pharaoh believed the interpretation and thought that Joseph's advice was very good but didn't have a person in mind for this job. As he was thinking about this, the cup bearer told him about how Joseph had been falsely accused and thrown in prison but because of his honesty, wisdom, reliability, and ability to comfort those in distress, the prison keeper eventually let Joseph run the entire prison. With the good reports Pharaoh received on Joseph, in addition to the divine power that allowed him to interpret the dream, he decided that there was no one better suited to fill this important position. [Genesis 41:38](#) So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" [Genesis 41:38 NLT](#).

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you what the dream means, there is no one as wise as you, so I will place you in charge of the entire kingdom. Only on the throne will I be greater than you." The king gave Joseph his ring to be able to sign anything into law, and gave him the second chariot, and dressed him in rich robes and commanded everyone to bow the knee to him. Just as Joseph had risen to a place of authority over Potiphar's household, he was placed in a position of full authority over Pharaoh's household. [Psalm 105:20](#) Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door. <sup>21</sup> Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household; he became ruler over all the king's possessions. [Psalm 105:20-21 NLT](#).

It is difficult to remain humble and true to principle when given so much power, but Joseph's character, and faith in God helped him to do so. He was faithful to duty regardless of whether he was a slave, a prisoner, or the prime minister of a country. Because Joseph was a good example and didn't try to hide his faith, the king and other great men of Egypt learned about Jehovah. Joseph's character did not form overnight but began when he was young. When he was obedient to his father, and to God, and performed his duties faithfully, he was laying the foundation of his character. [Job 28:28](#) And this is what he says to all humanity: "The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding." [Job 28:28 NLT](#).

Most people do not realize the importance of small choices in the development of character. Each day choices are made that determine whether we will qualify for bigger and more important responsibilities. If the mind becomes used to making decisions on principle and not pleasure, eventually the person will not waver between right and wrong. [Luke 16:10](#) "If you are faithful in little things, you will be

faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. [Luke 16:10 NLT](#). Good character is worth more than great riches, cannot be bought, is not inherited, and does happen by chance. It is the work of a lifetime, and is the result of persistent effort, development of natural gifts, and faithfulness to God.

## *Chapter 21—Joseph and His Brothers*

This chapter is based on [Genesis 41:54-56; 42-50](#).

Joseph immediately began putting his plan into action by constructing huge buildings to store the grain that he would be collecting. As they were filled, new ones were built over the next 7 years, and the amount of grain stored up was more than could be measured. But at the end of the 7 years of plenty, the famine began just as Joseph had predicted, and it was not just Egypt that was affected, but all the surrounding countries. When the Egyptian people were not able to feed themselves and went to Pharaoh for help, he told them all to go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you to do. So, Joseph opened the storehouses and began selling food to the Egyptians.

The famine extended all the way to the land of Canaan, where the family of Jacob lived. When he heard that there was food for sale in Egypt, he sent 10 sons, to Egypt to see if it was true. When they arrived, they were directed to the person in charge, and they bowed down before him with their faces to the ground. Joseph immediately recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him, and he remembered his dreams. As Joseph looked at them, he realized that Benjamin was not among them, and he immediately began to wonder if they had done something to him as well.

Joseph quickly thought of a plan that would allow him to question his brother about their family and specifically his father and brother. To their horror, the Egyptian in charge suddenly accused them of being spies and began questioning them. Through an interpreter, Joseph said to them, "You are spies and have come to find a weakness in our defenses." The brothers responded, "No my lord, we are all brothers, with the same father who had 12 sons, the youngest is with his father and one brother is no more." Joseph saw the opportunity he was looking for, when they mentioned their father and that 2 brothers were not present. So, he repeated the charge that they were spies, then questioning them further, as if looking for an inconsistency in their story. Finally, he said "Prove to me that you are telling the truth by one of you going home and bringing your youngest brother, while the rest of you wait in prison."

The brothers were in a very difficult position, with their families already starving, and knowing that Jacob would not allow Benjamin to go to Egypt, especially considering the danger they themselves were in. Since they didn't think Benjamin would be allowed to come back with them, they decided it would be better for them to just suffer the consequences and not involve any more of their family. When they told Joseph their decision, he threw them all into prison and left them

there for 3 days. At the end of 3 days, Joseph brought them out of prison, and said, "Since I'm a God-fearing man, I won't make your families suffer, so only one of you will remain in prison, while the rest of you can take the food you bought back home. But the next time you come back, I will expect your youngest brother to be with you." The brother's agreed even though they thought there was little chance that Jacob would allow Benjamin to return to Egypt with them. Because they spoke to Joseph through a translator, they felt free to talk among themselves, and they blamed their trouble on the way they had treated Joseph. As he listened, Joseph was overcome with emotion and had to leave the room to cry. When he returned to the room, he chose Simeon, who had been the guiltiest in the idea and act of selling him into slavery, to be the one to remain in prison.

The grain they came to buy was supplied and under secret instructions from Joseph, their money was placed just inside the top of the sack. On their journey home, when they discovered the money, they said to themselves, "Now we will be accused of stealing as well." Surely this must all be a punishment from God for the way we treated Joseph.

When they arrived home, the whole family was relieved that they had returned safely and with food. But when they told Jacob how they had been treated in Egypt, how Simeon had to be left behind, and that they had all returned without paying for the food, they couldn't see how this would end well. Jacob exclaimed, "I am losing my children one by one, first Joseph, now Simeon, and next Benjamin?" Then Reuben said, "Let me be responsible for Benjamin, and if I do not return with him, you can kill my two sons." But Jacob replied, "Benjamin will not go to Egypt. He is the only one left of my beloved Rachel, and if something happens to him, it will kill me."

When the family again began to run low on food again, Jacob told his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more. But they said, the governor told us that if he saw us again without our youngest brother, he would know we are spies. So, Judah said to his father, "Let Benjamin go with us, and I will take responsibility for bringing him back safely. If we do not go, we will all die of starvation, including Benjamin." Jacob saw the logic and realized he had to let Benjamin go, so he finally agreed, and made sure to send extra money, and also some special gifts for the governor. Jacob added, "May God Almighty have mercy on you so that the man releases Simeon and allows you to return with Benjamin. If I lose my children, then it will be as if I had no children."

When the 11 brothers arrived in Egypt, they were taken before Joseph, and when he saw Benjamin with them, he told his assistant to take them to his house, and he would have lunch with them. When the brothers realized they were being taken to

the governor's house they got worried, and said to each other, he is going to accuse us of stealing the food last time. As soon as they had an opportunity, they told Joseph's assistant about the money they found in their bags the last time, and assured him they didn't steal it, but he answered them, "Don't worry about it, I got your money. Your God and the God of your father must have given you treasure in your bags." The brothers were greatly relieved, and when Simeon was brought to them, they began to feel like God was with them this time.

When the governor joined them, they humbly bowed down to the ground before him and presented the gifts their father had sent. Then, through a translator, Joseph asked them if their father was still in good health, and they answered, "Your servant, our father is alive and in good health." Then Joseph asked about Benjamin, "Is this the youngest brother you told me about?" Then Joseph greeted his younger brother kindly, and spoke a blessing on him, but then he was overcome with emotion and had to step out of the room.

When Joseph came back into the room, they were seated for lunch. Because of his high rank, Joseph ate at a table by himself, and since Egyptians are not allowed to eat at the same table with foreigners, the other Egyptians present sat at their own table. As the brothers were seated, they were surprised to realize that they were arranged in order of their birth. When the food was brought out, they noticed the servers were practically stumbling over each other to serve Benjamin, and they gave him 5 times as much food as any of the rest of them. Joseph was watching them for signs of jealousy, in the special treatment of their youngest brother. Since they thought that Joseph couldn't understand their language, they spoke freely among themselves, giving him a good opportunity to know their thoughts and feelings.

Joseph was feeling pretty good about his brothers, but he had one more test for them before he would be fully convinced that they had changed. He told his assistant to fill their bags with grain and return their money again, but this time, to put his silver cup in the sack of the youngest. As the brothers were once again headed home, this time with Simeon and Benjamin, they were very happy about how different this return trip felt. They had not even left the city yet when they were alarmed to see Joseph's assistant racing to catch up with them. When he caught up to them, he immediately accused them saying, "Why have you repaid my master's kindness by stealing from him? Why did you take his precious silver cup that magically lets him know if his drink is poisoned." The brother's responded, "God knows we would never do such a thing. Why would we steal anything at all? Didn't we bring double the money to pay for the grain we bought this time and the last time? We are so certain that we didn't take the cup that if you find it among our possessions, that person should be punished with death and all the rest of us

will be your slaves. The man responded, "That is not necessary. Only the one who took the cup will be my slave and the rest of you can go on home."

Knowing they had nothing to hide, the brothers all made their grain sack ready for inspection, which began with the oldest. When the cup was actually found in Benjamin's bag, they tore their clothes in sorrow, because their father's nightmare was coming true. Instead of allowing Benjamin to return to Egypt alone, they all went along to see if something could be worked out so that Benjamin wouldn't have to stay in Egypt. When they arrived in Egypt and humbly bowed down to Joseph again, he said to them, "What have you done? Don't you know who I am and that I can even know what will happen in the future?" Obviously, Joseph knew that he couldn't read the future, but he allowed them to believe that so they would think he knew the secrets of their lives.

Judah, then stepped forward to speak and said, "What can we say, my lord? We are speechless, and don't know how we can clear this up. God has revealed our sin before you, so we will all be your slaves." Joseph replied, "God forbid that I should make the innocent be my slaves. Only the one who stole the cup will be my slave and the rest of you can return to your father." Then Judah moved closer and lowered his voice and humbly acknowledged Joseph's power and position. Then he told Joseph about how Benjamin was the only remaining son of his father's beloved wife Rachel, and how he really didn't want Benjamin to go to Egypt, for fear that something would happen to him. Judah continued, "I fear that if we return without the boy, it will cause my father to die from sorrow. I promised my father that I would personally be responsible for making sure that nothing bad happens to Benjamin. So now let me stay as your slave instead of Benjamin, so he can go home to his father. How can I go home to my father without the boy and see what will happen to him if he loses Benjamin."

Joseph was now truly convinced that his brothers had changed and were sorry for what they had done to him and their father. He ordered all the Egyptians out of the room and began to cry out loud, and said, "I am Joseph, is my father really still alive?" The brothers froze with fear and amazement, that the brother they had hated and treated so badly was now the ruler of Egypt. They immediately remembered the dreams and how they claimed that they would never bow down to him. They thought of the evil things they had done to him in an attempt to make sure the dreams never came true. No doubt, now that he had complete power over them, he would take his revenge.

Seeing how afraid of him they were, in a kind and gentle voice Joseph said, "Come closer to me, and don't be afraid. I am truly your brother Joseph, that you sold to Egypt, but don't be afraid or angry with yourselves, because it was God who sent

me to Egypt, so I could save your lives during this famine. There have only been 2 years of famine, and it will continue for 5 more years. God has made me like a father to Pharaoh, and I am in charge of everything that that happens in his house and am the ruler over the entire land of Egypt. So, hurry home and tell my father that I am alive, and that God has made me the prime minister of Egypt. Tell him to come back with his entire household, and I will take care of all of you, so you don't become poor from having to keep buying food for the next 5 years."

Then Joseph hugged Benjamin, and cried on his shoulder, and then did the same with each of his brothers. As they continued to talk, the brothers humbly begged for forgiveness for what they did to him and were now partially relieved from the guilt that they had been carrying for all those years, now that they knew he was alive and doing so well.

News of the Joseph's family quickly spread through the palace and when it reached Pharaoh, he told Joseph, "Bring your family and they can have the best of the land of Egypt." This time the brothers were sent home with plenty of food, but also with wagons to transport all their women, children, and possessions, back to Egypt. Joseph gave them all gifts, but he gave the best to Benjamin, and then he said, "Make sure you don't argue and quarrel on the way home."

When the brothers reached home, with a wagon train, and all the additional donkeys and supplies, they told their father that Joseph was alive and is the governor of the whole land of Egypt. Jacob could hardly believe what he was hearing but seeing everything, and having Benjamin back, he believed and said, "It is enough, Joseph my son is still alive, and I will go see him before I die." The 10 brothers then had to confess to Jacob their sin, their cruelty to Joseph, and their lie to cover it up. He was shocked that they could be so cruel, but seeing how it turned out for good, he forgave them.

On the way, when they came to Beersheba, Jacob offered sacrifices to God and asked Him if they were doing the right thing by going to Egypt. That night, God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him, "Go to Egypt, and I will be with you, and will make your descendants into a great nation, and I will bring them back to the land of Canaan." It was the promise given to Abraham, that his descendants would become a great nation and would inherit the land of Canaan, but part of this promise would be fulfilled in the land of Egypt. Instead of mixing with the surrounding heathen Canaanites, they could have their own land with the king's blessing, where they would be provided for and protected by Joseph. In addition to Joseph's protection, Egyptians looked down on shepherds, and would not want to mingle with them, making it easier to remain separate and distinct, and to be isolated from idolatry.

When Jacob's family reached Egypt, they were directed to the land of Goshen, and Joseph came in his chariot to greet and welcome his father. When Joseph saw his father, he jumped off the chariot, ran to him, and threw his arms around him and cried. Then Jacob said, "I can die now that I have seen your face and know that you are alive and well."

Joseph took 5 of his brothers to meet Pharaoh, and told them what to say, and they did as they were told saying, "Our home is in the land of Canaan, but we have come for a time because of the famine, and we are shepherds, like our ancestors were." So, Pharaoh, told them to stay in the best land, Goshen, which would be good for their animals, but would also give them the space to remain separate from the Egyptians. Joseph wanted them to say these things specifically, so that Pharaoh would know they are not wanting to become Egyptians and could leave whenever they chose.

Joseph also brought his father to meet Pharaoh, and though he was only a shepherd, Jacob blessed him. Jacob was not intimidated in Pharaoh's palace because he had spoken with the king of the universe. When Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was, he answered, "I have lived 130 hard years, but that is short compared to my ancestors." Then Jacob pronounced another blessing on Pharaoh.

Jacob lived 17 happy years after moving to Egypt. His sons were changed, there was peace and safety, and most of all, he had the love and care of the prime minister of Egypt. When he knew the end was near, he asked for Joseph and made him promise that he would be buried in the cave of Machpelah, in Canaan, where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were all laid to rest.

Joseph had two sons with his wife Asenath, the daughter of the priest of On. They would have been teenagers, close to 20 years of age at this time. [[Genesis 41:50](#)]. Through their mother they could have had positions in the priesthood in Egypt, and through their father, they could have had positions in the royal court of Egypt. But Joseph chose for them to become shepherds and members of the household of Israel. He brought them to his father, to be blessed, and Jacob said that he would adopt them as his own, making them equal to Reuben and Simeon, his two oldest sons. In this way Jacob was really giving the birthright privilege of a double portion to Joseph. Jacob justified this because Reuben had slept with one of his wives, forfeiting his right as the oldest. Jacob laid his hands on the two boys and prayed for God's blessing on them, and from this time on, Ephraim and Manasseh were known as sons of Jacob, and in the future, as tribes of Israel.

Finally, in the last act of Jacob before he died, he called all his sons before him, to tell them what the future held for each of them. Jacob was shown a prophetic vision of the future and spoke these words under the inspiration of God.

"Reuben, my first born, the beginning of my strength, the child of my youth." Jacob began, as he might have if Reuben were worthy of the birthright as the firstborn, but he continued prophetically. "You are unstable as water, and you will not excel." As a tribe in Israel, Reuben never did anything noteworthy, were not even as numerous as Dan, and was one of the first taken into captivity.

Next in age were Simeon and Levi, who were noted for murdering the Shechemites and were also most guilty in selling Joseph into slavery. Simeon was the smallest tribe when the Israelites entered Canaan and were just given a small portion of Judah's land. Moses didn't even mention them in his last blessing over Israel. Levi received no inheritance except for 48 cities scattered throughout the land, but because of their faithfulness when Israel fell into sin at Sinai, they were blessed to be assigned to the service of the sanctuary.

Judah was prophesied to be victorious over enemies, and king and leader among Israel. "Judah, you will be praised by your brothers, you will be victorious over your enemies. Your brothers will bow down to you, you will be like a lion eating its prey and crouched ready to attack. The scepter of kings will never leave you until the One comes who will be honored by all nations." The tribe of Judah was symbolized by a lion, which was fitting, partly because of king David, and the unbroken dynasty of kings, but mostly because of the true "Lion of the tribe of Judah," who will be king over all nations of the earth.

Small mention is made of the descendants of each of the other brothers until Jacob came to Joseph. "Joseph is a branch full of fruit growing by a well. He was wounded and hated, but he grew in strength, and the God of his fathers helped and blessed him. His descendants will be blessed with many births and mothers' milk to feed on. Your grandfather had only one blessing to give, but your father had blessings for you after blessing your brothers. Your blessing will extend to the richness of the produce on the hills where your descendants will live. May all these blessings be on your head, Joseph, prince among you're your brothers."

The last years of Jacob's life were peaceful, like a beautiful evening after a stormy day. Beginning with the sin of lying to his father and stealing his brother's blessing, Jacob lived a hard and troubled life. He had to flee from his own home and never saw his mother again. He worked 7 years to marry the love of his life, only to be given another woman he didn't love. He worked 20 years for a greedy covetous relative who took advantage of him at every opportunity. His daughter was raped, and his sons were murderers. His beloved Rachel died young, while giving birth to his last son. His oldest son slept with one of his wives. And maybe worst of all, his favorite son was sold into slavery by his other sons. All these troubles could be considered consequences of his sin, or discipline that produced

good fruit in the end. [Hebrews 12:11](#) No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening-- it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. [Hebrews 12:11 NLT](#).

The Bible doesn't try to hide the faults of men who were called and even favored by God. In many cases, their faults were mentioned even more than their faithfulness. Many have used this fact to not believe in the Bible, but if it were not inspired, the writers would most likely have not written so freely of the faults and shortcomings of its heroes. If this were the case, then most would be discouraged when they are not able to measure up to the perfect lives of the characters in the Bible. But we can be encouraged, when we see that they struggled like we do, and yet were not rejected by God, when they repented, but instead by His grace, were forgiven and continued on in faith.

When Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were again fearful for their lives. They thought that his kindness to them might have been for the sake of their father. Jacob even told them that after he was gone, they should beg Joseph for forgiveness again. The brothers were afraid to even approach Joseph in person, and sent a messenger to him saying, "Our father recommended to us that we beg for your forgiveness for the terrible thing we did to you, and hope that you will forgive us." When the brothers received word that Joseph cried when he got their message, they got the courage to approach him in person. When they came before him, they bowed down to him again and pledged themselves to be his servants. But Joseph had already forgiven them and was sad that they thought he might still be thinking of getting revenge on them. He said to them, "Don't be afraid, when you thought to do something bad to me, God turned it into something good, and out of it many lives were saved. Don't worry, I will keep taking care of you and your children."

There are some similarities between the life of Joseph and the life of Christ. Out of jealousy, the brothers persecuted Joseph by selling him as a slave, and by doing so, thought they could prevent his elevation over them. The religious leaders were jealous of the popularity of Jesus and killed him to keep him from becoming king over them. But in both cases, the evil actions were used by God to bring about the very thing it was meant to stop. Through his slavery and hardship in Egypt, Joseph became a savior to his father's family; through His crucifixion, Christ became the Savior of the human race. Joseph was sold by his brothers; Jesus was betrayed by one of His own disciples. Joseph was falsely accused and punished for something he didn't do; Jesus was also falsely accused and condemned to death for something He was not guilty of. Joseph willingly forgave those who were mean to him and treated him unfairly; Christ forgave those who nailed Him to the cross, and not only them, but all who have confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness.

Joseph lived 54 years after his father's death and was able to see the great-grandchildren of his son Ephraim, and he saw the great growth in population of his father's family. When he saw that his end was near, he called the Israelite leaders, and even though he was like royalty in Egypt, he still considered it the land of his exile. He made it clear that he considered himself an Israelite, and as a result, wished to participate in God's promise to inherit the land of Canaan. He said, "God will bring you out of the land of Egypt and take you back to the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, please promise me that when He does, that your descendants will take my bones with them, so they can be buried in the promised land.

Joseph died when he was 110 years old, and his body was treated as Egyptian royalty and placed in a coffin. Over the centuries, the promise was remembered and passed down, and when the Israelites were enslaved, it gave them hope that one day they would be allowed to go free and return to the land of promise.

## *Chapter 22—Moses*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 1-4](#).

During the years of famine in Egypt, the Egyptians became more and more in debt to the kingdom, until eventually they all became Pharaoh's slaves. But Joseph had a very compassionate implementation of slavery. He said, "all the land is owned by Pharaoh, but you will take care of the land, and will be given food and seed to plant, and should give Pharaoh one fifth of the produce of the land." Except for owning land, their lives would go on as usual, living in their homes, farming, and paying a 20% tax.

The children of Israel did not have to sell themselves into slavery because Pharaoh gave them the land of Goshen and allowed Joseph to provide free food for them. The king was grateful to Joseph because Egypt was managed so well, and the kingdom had gained so much wealth from surrounding nations buying food. Pharaoh even publicly acknowledged the blessing of the God of Joseph and allowed the Israelites to continue living in Egypt tax free.

Sometime after Joseph's death, a new Pharaoh came along who noticed that there were more Israelites than Egyptians. He acted ignorant of the great service of Joseph to the land of Egypt and decided to take advantage of the Israelites. He also reasoned that they would be in trouble if war broke out with another country and the Israelites sided with the enemy.

The Israelites, while keeping separate in race, religion, and culture, must have integrated to some degree in business. There were probably many skilled workmen among them who labored for income. So, Pharaoh replaced the labor supervisors with harsh slave masters, and thought by being cruel to them, he might be able to reduce their numbers. But it seemed, the more harshly he treated them, the more their population grew, and he was not able to crush their spirit of independence.

Pharaoh then decided he needed to take a more direct approach to population control and commanded the Egyptian midwives to kill the male babies during birth. These women could not bring themselves to be so cruel and as a result were blessed by God. Seeing that was not working, he then commanded all Egyptians to seek out and kill every male baby by drowning them in the river. Satan was behind this cruelty and hoped that he might destroy the deliverer which he understood to be coming.

At this time a son was born to Amran and Jochebed from the tribe of Levi. Israelite parents must have tried many different things to hide their baby boys, but this mother took an unusual approach to saving her son. She had kept him hidden for 3

months but feared her luck might run out. So, she made a little boat and floated her son on the river, leaving his sister Miriam, to keep an eye on him. No doubt Jochebed had prayed for protection for her son, and unseen angels were there watching over him as well.

Pharaoh's daughter went to the river to bathe one day and saw the basket floating on the river. Out of curiosity, she fetched it to see what was inside. When she saw the cute little baby boy inside, she immediately knew he was an Israelite, and why he was there. She had compassion on the baby and his mother and decided she would save the baby by adopting him as her own.

Meanwhile Miriam had been secretly watching to see how Pharaoh's daughter would react. When she saw the compassion she showed toward the baby, she came out of hiding and asked, "Would you like me to go find a Hebrew to nurse the baby for you?" On receiving an answer of yes, Miriam immediately ran off to find her mother. When Jochebed came back as the Hebrew nurse, Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this baby and feed and care for him for me and I will pay you."

Jochebed's prayer had been answered, and she believed her son had been saved for some great purpose. She knew that he would one day soon be taken to the palace where he would be surrounded by temptations and worldly and idolatrous influences. She decided, in the short time she had with him to teach him as much as she could about God, his people and the promise of their release from slavery. Knowing he was adopted into the royal family, she also taught him about fairness, compassion, and loyalty. She taught him how to pray to God, and about the uselessness of worshipping idols.

Moses was taught by his mother until he was about 12 years old, when he was taken to the palace by his adopted mother. But even in the luxury of the palace, and in his education as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses never forgot what his Hebrew mother had taught him. The lessons learned from his mother kept him from getting too proud and shielded him from the evil influences of the palace. As the man used by God to establish the Israelite nation, and to author the first 5 books of the Bible, think of how great the influence of that one Hebrew slave woman was. In a similar way, every mother, no matter how lowly the task may seem, can have a great impact on the world for good or for evil. She is not fully responsible for the choices her children make when they are grown, but her training when they are young can greatly influence their choices when they are older. Parents should do what they can to teach their children to love and obey God, and they will not only be training them for their lives on earth, but to finally reign with God forever and ever.

In Pharaoh's court, Moses was trained as a future leader of the Egyptian nation. [Acts 7:22](#) Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action. [Acts 7:22 NLT](#). He was loved by the military, for his intelligence and ability as a commander. Seeing his excellence, Pharaoh had even decided that his adopted grandson would become the next ruler of Egypt. The evil attempt by Satan to destroy the people of God, and person who would lead the Israelites out of slavery, was used by God to train and educate the future leader of His people.

Israelite leaders had been visited by angels who informed them that Moses was the man that God would use to lead them out of slavery. Moses himself was also visited by angels to let him know that he was chosen for this great task. He probably felt that his education and his ability as a military command made him a good choice to lead his people in a military revolt against the Egyptians. Moses even kept himself from getting too attached to his adopted mother so it wouldn't affect his ability to do what God wanted him to do.

The highest position in Egypt, Pharaoh, which Moses seemed destined for was deeply rooted in the national religion. To take this position, he would have to become a priest and embrace the religion of Egypt. Moses was a good student in all areas except his religion classes. He refused to worship the gods of Egypt and remained faithful to his Hebrew faith. His stubborn refusal was tolerated for the time because he was so beloved by the king, the princess, and the people.

[Hebrews 11:24](#) It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup> He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. [Hebrews 11:24-26 NLT](#). Moses was a great man with great abilities, and the throne of Egypt was his to take. He stood above everyone, in his knowledge and understanding of history, philosophy, poetry, law, and even military tactics. But he turned his back on that life, choosing to suffer with his people instead. Moses realized that the reward offered by God in the end was infinitely greater than the best that could be offered on earth.

One day when he was 40 years old, Moses was out walking around, checking in on his people, when he saw an Egyptian slave driver cruelly beating an Israelite. Moses could not just stand by and watch this cruelty, especially against his own people, so he stepped in to intervene and killed the Egyptian. The Israelite that he had saved was the only other person around, so Moses quickly buried the Egyptian in the sand. Moses hoped that this act would show his people that he was ready to stand with them and help them to fight for their freedom. The next day Moses saw

two Israelites fighting, and one seemed to be bullying the other. He approached them and tried to stop them, but the bully said, "Who made you a leader and judge over us? Are you going to kill me like you did to the Egyptian yesterday?" It was not long before Pharaoh heard about what Moses had done. Pharaoh's advisors told him that Moses intended to lead his people in a revolt against Egypt and take the throne for himself. Moses quickly realized that his life was in danger and fled toward Arabia at once.

Through God's providence, Moses ended up finding a place to stay with Jethro, who was a prince of Midian, and a priest and worshiper of God. Moses worked for Jethro as a shepherd, eventually married one of his daughters, and lived there for the next 40 years of his life. Moses had fallen into the same trap as Jacob, and Abraham, when they took matters into their own hands to try to fulfill God's promise. Moses had given up on the idea of leading the Israelites in a military revolt against the Egyptians, and now God could begin to teach him the skills that he would actually need. Moses would need lots of patience, he needed the skills he would develop as a father, but most of all he needed to learn to trust and obey God. Most would have thought the 40 years working as a shepherd was a waste of time for someone who would be the future leader of a nation, but God saw it as a necessary part of his preparation for the job ahead. In fact, there was much that Moses needed to unlearn, including affection for his adopted mother, the privileges and praise he received as the king's grandson, the luxury of living in the palace, and dependence on his own wisdom and ability.

All who have been called by God to accomplish a task, have had to learn that depending on human wisdom is a weakness. [James 1:5](#) If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. [James 1:5 NLT](#). But God does not give this wisdom if people choose to remain in the darkness of relying on themselves. Human effort must be put into earnest and persistent prayer. Many do not fill the position God would want them to because they do not put in the effort to do what they can and must do. All who are called to do a special work for God must develop mental and moral strength, by uniting their effort with God's power.

In the mountainous wilderness, Moses was alone with his sheep and with God. In this landscape, he was able to see the greatness of Him who could create all things. The manmade temples and palaces of Egypt no longer impressed him, and he realized how powerless the gods of Egypt were compared to the God of the universe. His pride and confidence in his own abilities disappeared. Moses became patient, humble [[Numbers 12:3](#)], and very strong in his faith in God.

Year after year, Moses repeated his simple task of watching over sheep. This gave him many hours to think about how God had led in the lives of his ancestors and his people. Moses prayed for his people who were still suffering in slavery in Egypt. Here in the wilderness, alone with God, Moses was inspired to write what would become the first book of the Bible, Genesis. This book was not only a great blessing to his own people, but to all who have chosen to read and believe it.

The Pharaoh in Egypt that Moses had fled from died, and the cry of the suffering of his people went up to God. The time had come for the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this release of the Israelites from Egypt, it would be clear that there is a God Who can accomplish His will regardless of what human power stands in His way. This deliverance was not to be obtained by a great military victory, planned and executed by a might general, but led by a simple shepherd, who spoke for God.

When the time had come, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush near Horeb, which would later be known as the mountain of God. Moses saw a bush on fire which in itself would not be strange, but the fire kept burning and the bush did not burn up. As he went closer to look at it, he heard a voice from the fire calling him by name. Moses answered, and the voice said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses was afraid and looked away. In his time in the wilderness, he had lost his pride, and in its place had gained reverence for God. We should also approach God with reverence, not as we would approach another person. It is only through the name of Jesus that we can even approach God with any sense of confidence, but not boldness out of a sense of self-importance. God continued, "I have seen the cruelty My people are experiencing in Egypt, and I have heard their cry when they are beaten and mistreated. I know they are hurting, and now is the time for their delivery. Now is the time for them to inherit the land that their ancestors were promised, a land flowing with milk and honey. I want you to go before Pharaoh and tell him to let My people go."

Moses had long ago given up on the idea that he would have anything to do with the release of the Israelites from slavery. He answered God, "Who am I, that I should go before Pharaoh, and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" But God said, "I will surely be with you, and when they have come out of Egypt, they will come and worship Me on this mountain." Moses thought of the reception he received the last time he tried to help them, and now he felt much less capable of this great task. Many of the Israelites now barely had any knowledge of God, and Moses said, "If I told them the God of their fathers sent me to them, and they ask who this God is and what is He called, what can I tell them?" God said, "I AM THAT I AM. Tell them that I AM sent me to you."

God told Moses to meet with the elders of Israel to tell them that He was ready to deliver them from slavery. Then you will go before Pharaoh and tell him, "The God of the Hebrews has spoken to us, and we are asking you to let us go, so we can travel 3 days into the wilderness, where we will sacrifice to our God." God warned Moses that Pharaoh would not give them permission to leave, but this would be an opportunity to demonstrate His power to both the Israelites and the Egyptians. He was also told, that when they were finally given permission to leave, the women who had served as live-in house slaves should ask their masters for clothes, gold, silver, and jewelry, as pay for their labor. The miracles that would finally convince Pharaoh to release them, would make their master's afraid and willing to give them anything.

But Moses was still not convinced that he was the man for the job, and still doubted the Israelites would believe him, so, God gave him a sign to help them believe. He said to Moses, "Throw the rod you are holding in your hand to the ground." When he did, it became a snake, and Moses jumped back in fear of it. God then said, "Grab it by the tail and it will turn back into your rod." Next God told Moses to put his hand inside his clothes near his chest. When he removed it, his hand was completely covered in leprosy. God told him to put his hand back in again and when he removed his hand again, it was clean and healthy like the other. He was to use these two signs to prove to the Israelites and Pharaoh that there was a supernatural power at work among them.

Still trying to avoid God's calling, Moses then said, "I can't communicate very well, and am slow to think of what to say, and it has been so long since I have spoken the Egyptian language." God answered, "Who made man's mouth? Don't you think I can give you the words to say?" But Moses was still hesitant. At first his reluctance was motivated by humility, but now he was doubting God's ability to work through him. Finally, God said, "Your brother Aaron can speak well. You will tell him what I want him to say, and he will say it for you, and you will use your rod and perform the miraculous signs."

Moses was out of excuses, and it seems that God was not going to give up on him. The lack of confidence in his own ability forced him to trust in God's power to work through him to accomplish this great task. If we accept the task God asks us to do, He will give us the ability that is needed to carry it out. If Moses had thought he was capable of freeing the Israelites with his own skill and ability, as he had 40 years before, he would have been unfit for the job.

Moses went home to his wife and father-in-law and told them that he had to go to go see his people Egypt. Jethro agreed, and sent Moses and his wife and children, with his blessing. Moses didn't tell him the real reason he wanted to go to Egypt,

because he was afraid Jethro might not let his daughter, Zipporah, and the children go with him. Once Moses had made the commitment to go, God relieved some of his fear by telling him the people who wanted to kill him were dead. But on the way a strange thing took place. An angel appeared and without any explanation, looked like he was going to kill Moses. Somehow his wife realized the reason Moses was in trouble, was because they had not circumcised their second son, which was a requirement in the covenant God had made with Abraham. To save her husband's life, Zipporah quickly went and circumcised her son. Moses could not be the leader of Israel when he was not in compliance with the covenant. In fact, he would not have received God's protection while knowingly disobeying a command of God.

The same lesson will apply to Christ's followers at the end times. During the time of trouble, they will be protected by angels, but those who ignore even a single one of God's commands cannot receive protection.

## *Chapter 23—The Plagues of Egypt*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 5-10](#).

Aaron had been told ahead of time by angels where Moses would be and to go meet him. There near Mount Horeb where they met, Moses told Aaron everything God had told him and showed him the signs that he would use [[Exodus 4:28](#)]. The two of them then traveled back to the land of Goshen in Egypt, where the Israelites lived. When they arrived, they assembled the elders and told them the good news and showed the signs to a large group of people. And they all believed and bowed their heads in worship to God [[Exodus 4:29-31](#)].

Next Moses and Aaron walked right into the palace to deliver their message to Pharaoh. "Jehovah, the God of Israel says, Let My people go so they can hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh boldly responded, "Who does Jehovah think He is that He can tell me to let Israel go? I don't know Jehovah, and neither will I let Israel go." The brothers answered, "Our God met with us and told us to travel 3 days into the wilderness, and to sacrifice unto Him. We must do what He says so He doesn't punish us."

During their time in Egypt, many Israelites had lost the knowledge of God's laws that had been passed down from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Many no longer kept the Sabbath holy, and now their slave masters made it impossible to take a day of rest. But Moses told them that before God could deliver them, they must start obeying Him. When Israelites didn't report for work on Sabbath, Pharaoh was told and he angrily accused Moses and Aaron of interfering with their work. When he saw that they had some leadership and that they were acting together, the king decided that they must be plotting to break free, so he determined to keep them so busy they would have no time for planning.

Much of the slave labor was used to make bricks, for Pharaoh's building projects. The bricks were made of clay mixed with straw and dried in the sun. Up to this time, the straw had been provided for them, but now the king demanded that they find their own straw and still make the same number of bricks as before. The Egyptians had appointed Hebrews to be in charge of groups of slaves, and now when they couldn't deliver their quota of bricks, they were punished. The group leaders complained to Moses that he had gotten them in trouble with Pharaoh and given him a reason to beat them to death.

Seeing that things had gotten worse for his people, Moses went to God and asked, "Why have You sent me to make things worse for my people? Since I went to Pharaoh, to demand the release of Your people, he has made things worse for

them." God said, "Just wait and see what I will do to him. When I'm done, he will be begging you to leave."

There were some Israelites who had remained faithful to God, and the Egyptians were somewhat familiar with the concept that their slaves had a God, whom they claimed had created the world. Faithful Israelites tried to remind the others of the promises most recently from Joseph, but also from Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. The Israelites claimed the Egyptians worshipped false gods, but which nation was rich and powerful, and which were slaves. The Egyptians claimed that if the Israelite God was truly powerful, He would not leave them in slavery but would set them free. But faithful Israelites knew that their nation was in this condition because many of them had forsaken God for the gods of the Egyptians.

Many Israelites expected to receive their freedom without any suffering or hardship, but at the same time they had little faith in the God of their fathers. Some would rather remain slaves than go through this new hardship they were experiencing in the process of being set free. They blamed Moses and Aaron for this and wished they would be left alone. Most Israelites needed to learn some lessons about the power of their God, and the stubbornness and cruelty of Pharaoh would be the thing that allowed this education.

God told Moses and Aaron to go before Pharaoh again, but they were warned that he would not let Israel go free without some demonstrations of His power. Each time this would occur, Moses would describe the plague, and the king could choose whether to obey God or suffer the consequences of disobedience. Each plague would be worse until stubborn king would acknowledge Him as the only true and living God, and the maker of heaven and earth. The Egyptians would also suffer because of their boasts about the superiority of their gods over the God of the Israelites. Through the plagues, even surrounding nations would hear and learn about His power, but maybe most importantly, the Israelites must turn from their idolatry and return to worshipping the one and only true God.

Once again Moses and Aaron entered the palace to demand the release of the Israelites. This time Pharaoh asked for some kind of demonstration of the power of their God. They were ready for this request and Aaron threw his rod down on the ground and it turned into a real living serpent. But when Pharaoh's magicians threw down their rods, they also became serpents, but Aaron's swallowed the magician's serpents. The magic performed by the magicians was Satan working invisibly behind the scenes, but since it looked the same Pharaoh was unimpressed and refused to release the Israelites. It is impossible for Satan to create life, but he is a powerful being who can work unseen to produce the appearance of miracles to the human eye. Satan succeeded in deceiving Pharaoh into believing that the

miracles of God were nothing more than magic. He also did the same when Christ was on earth, working miracles.

The next appearance before Pharaoh was at the Nile River, where the king went daily as part of his worship ritual. The overflowing Nile River was the source of food and wealth for Egypt, and it was worshipped as a god. It was here that God would show his power over one of the gods of the Egyptians. The rod was held out over the water, and it turned into blood. As a result, the fish died, and the river began to stink. Even the water from the ground near the river turned to blood. Pharaoh found some clear water and his magicians again with the power of Satan, seemed to be able to copy the miracle on a small scale. So, Pharaoh did not believe and refused to let Israel go free.

Next, was the plague of frogs, which came up from the river and completely overran the land, getting into people's houses, even in their beds and all through their kitchens. The frog was another thing the Egyptians treated as sacred, but now they couldn't even avoid stepping on them. Even though the magicians seemed to be able to copy this miracle as well, they were unable to use their magic to remove the frogs. When Pharaoh couldn't take it any longer, he called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Please ask the Lord to remove the frogs and I will let His people go free." They asked him for a specific time for the plague of frogs to end, and Pharaoh chose the next day, hoping that the plague would end on its own, but it didn't. The next day at the specified time, the frogs did not disappear, but they immediately all died, leaving a huge mess for the Egyptians to clean up. Eventually they began to stink as the dead bodies began to rot. But as soon as he got relief from the frogs, he immediately changed his mind and refused to let the Israelites go.

The next plague was predicted after Pharaoh again refused the request to release the Israelites. Aaron stretched out his rod, and it seemed that all the dust throughout Egypt turned into tiny insects, possible lice or gnats. This time God did not allow Pharaoh's magicians to copy the miracle, so they told the king this was the work of God.

Next came the flies, which were everywhere, both outside and inside their houses. And they were big flies that bit, leaving a painful sore on both people and animals. However, this time the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived, was not affected by the plague. When he couldn't take it anymore, Pharaoh offered to give the Israelites time off to sacrifice to God in Egypt, but Moses said, we cannot do that. If the Egyptians see us sacrificing their sacred animals, they will kill us. Moses said, we must be at least 3 days journey away from here before we can offer

sacrifices to our God. The plague ended, but again Pharaoh refused to keep his promise.

Next, God struck the animals throughout Egypt with a deadly infectious disease. Pharaoh had been told up front that the animals belonging to the Israelites would be spared, and he sent people to spy on them, and it was just as Moses said. But he still refused to let Israel go free.

Moses was next told to go to Pharaoh and take some ashes from the furnace and throw them into the air, and wherever they landed, large, painful sores, or boils, broke out on both people and animals. Priests and magicians had aided in encouraging Pharaoh in his stubborn resistance, but now they were suffering, and their magic was worthless. The Egyptian people were able to see that these magicians couldn't even protect themselves from the power of Israel's God.

Hundreds of years before, in prophetic vision, Abraham had seen his descendants suffering under a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Abraham was told that the nation that oppressed them would be punished, and his people would be released with great riches. The time for the fulfillment of that vision was approaching soon.

Before the 7<sup>th</sup> plague was announced to Pharaoh, Moses had an extra message from God to him. "I am sending these plagues on you, the people working in your palace, and on the rest of the people of Egypt, so that you will know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. But instead of killing you and your people immediately, I have preserved your life, so that I can demonstrate My power, so that the whole earth will know about Me. And I know that even now you will still refuse to let My people go." [[Exodus 9:13-17](#)]. Then Moses told Pharaoh that the next plague would come in about 24 hours, and it would be the worst hailstorm that Egypt had ever experienced in its entire history. Moses even offered a bit of advice, telling Pharaoh that every person and the few animals left should be brought indoors, because anyone left outside when the hailstorm hit would die. When the hail came, it was accompanied by terrible lightning and thunder, and it damaged every plant and tree, and any person or animal left outside was killed. But in the land of Goshen there was no hail. Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said, "I have sinned this time. Ask the Lord to stop the hail and I will let the people go." But as soon as the hail stopped, Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people of Israel go free.

The Bible says, "I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go." [[Exodus 4:21](#)]. This didn't mean that God literally made Pharaoh choose to not let the Israelites go. The king was given incredible signs of God's power, and each time he rejected the command of God, he became more and more determined to stand in rebellion. The first rejection was like a seed that was planted, that grew

through each succeeding disobedience, until the plant produced the fruit of his dead firstborn son. God calls people to repentance, through His faithful servants, but each warning rejected, and each sign ignored, will make it easier to continue on the path of rebellion. Like Pharaoh, that person is hardening their heart against the call of the Holy Spirit. Giving into temptation once, will make it easier the next time. Seeds sown will produce a harvest. [Galatians 6:7](#) Don't be misled--you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. [Galatians 6:7 NLT](#).

Once again Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh and warned him of a plague of locusts that would be worse than any that had been seen in generations. What little green that remained after the storm would be totally consumed. The nation of Egypt had lost most of their animals, and crops, and trees, and as a result would be faced with starvation. The princes and counselors angrily demanded, "How long will you allow this man to keep hurting us. Let them go so they can serve their God. Don't you know that Egypt has been destroyed?" But Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron, "I will let the men go serve the Lord, but the women and children must remain behind." So, they left, and when they held out the rod over the land, the east wind blew in the worst plague of locusts the land had ever seen or ever will see again. The sky was darkened because so many were in the air, and they devoured every green thing that was left, they also covered the ground, invaded every house and even the palace. Pharaoh quickly sent for Moses and Aaron again and said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Please forgive me one more time and ask your God to take away the locusts." When a strong west wind blew them all into the Red Sea, the king refused to let them go again.

The Egyptian people couldn't take any more. The nation had been taught that Pharaoh should be worshipped, but they now saw that the God of their slaves was more powerful than him. The masters dared not mistreat their slaves anymore, and everyone wondered what disaster would come next.

Suddenly darkness fell over the land. This was not a normal darkness, but it was so thick and black that you could practically feel it, in fact, it even seemed difficult to breathe. The darkness remained for 3 days, but in the land of Goshen, there was daylight. The Egyptians worshipped the sun and moon, and they saw that their gods were under attack by the God of the Israelites. Fearing that the darkness would never end, Pharaoh once again sent for Moses and Aaron. This time he said that the women and children could go but to leave their animals behind. When they refused this offer, Pharaoh shouted in anger, "Get out! Leave, and don't let me ever see you again, because if you do, I will kill you." The people were all afraid of Moses, including those who worked in the palace, and even the king did not dare to

harm him. After all, without him, the plagues might never end. When Moses left, he said, "Don't worry, I will not see your face again."

## *Chapter 24—The Passover*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 11](#); [12:1-32](#)

Before the plagues had even started, God had warned Pharaoh of the ultimate consequences of disobedience. [Exodus 4:22](#) Then you will tell him, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. <sup>23</sup> I commanded you, "Let my son go, so he can worship me." But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!" [Exodus 4:22-23 NLT](#). God had chosen Israel as the people who would be the keepers of His law on earth, and as a result they would receive certain blessings that went along with this privilege. This was similar to the privileges and blessings the first-born son received, as passed down from Abraham, so God called Israel His first-born son among all the nations of the earth.

The threat to Pharaoh's son was the last resort and would only be needed if he rejected all of God's warnings and requests. Since Pharaoh had done that, the last plague was about to fall on him and all the Egyptians. Even though Pharaoh had threatened to kill Moses if he saw him again, God would not send this last plague without giving Pharaoh one last chance to obey. Moses went before him and said, "This is what God says, about midnight tonight, I will go throughout the whole land of Egypt and kill every first-born, from the lowliest servants, and even the animals, all the way up to your own. The whole land will be in mourning, like it has never been before, nor ever will be again. But the people of Israel will be safe, so you will know that I can tell the difference between your people and Mine. After this all the Egyptians will bow down to Me and will beg the Israelites to leave the country."

Before this took place, God gave the Israelites specific instructions to prepare themselves for departure, but most importantly how to ensure their safety when the angel of death came. Each family had to kill a physically perfect lamb or goat and using a hyssop plant like a paint brush, put blood on the sides and top of the doorway into their house. If they did this, when the destroying angel came to their house at midnight, it would pass over the house, and they would be safe. They were also to roast the animal over a fire and then eat it with bitter herbs, and bread without yeast, and be dressed and ready to leave. This event would be remembered each year, forever after, and celebrated with a feast. And when your children ask the reason for the celebration, you will tell them that when the Lord killed the first-born of the Egyptians, He passed over the houses of the Israelites, so it will be known as the Lord's Passover.

The Israelites were to learn that the life of the first-born belongs to the Lord, and their first-born were not saved because they were more worthy. They were saved

because the blood of the animal was offered in their place. [Numbers 3:13](#) for all the firstborn males are mine. On the day I struck down all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, I set apart for myself all the firstborn in Israel, both of people and of animals. They are mine; I am the LORD." [Numbers 3:13 NLT](#). Later when the sanctuary was built, the entire tribe of Levi was chosen to represent the first-born of Israel, and their jobs would be to work in the sanctuary [[Numbers 8:18](#)]. But the Israelites were still to redeem their first-born sons with an animal sacrifice [[Numbers 18:15-16](#)].

The Passover was not only to be thought of as a celebration of the past, but also as a symbol of the time that all people would be freed from slavery to sin by the blood of the Lamb of God. [1 Corinthians 5:7](#) ... Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. [1 Corinthians 5:7 NLT](#). The blood on the door frame symbolized that the sacrifice of Christ was not automatically applied to the whole world, but it must be accepted and applied by each person individually.

The hyssop would forever after be a symbol of purification, and used in the cleansing of lepers, and of the uncleanness after touching a dead body. [Psalm 51:7](#) Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. [Psalm 51:7 NLT](#). Other symbols from the Passover were that no bones were to be broken when the lamb was killed, which was fulfilled when no bones were broken on the body of Jesus when He died on the cross [[John 19:36](#)]. The sacrificed animal was also to be eaten, symbolizing that it is not just by knowledge or belief that we are saved, but by constantly receiving spiritual nourishment from Jesus. [John 6:53](#) So Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. <sup>54</sup> But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day. [John 6:53-54 NLT](#). By doing this, the follower of Christ will not only be a believer, but will become like Him, and will be seen by others to be like Him. Bitter herbs were symbolic of the bitterness of slavery, but also the bitterness we feel because of our sins, when we take Christ into our heart. Yeast is symbolic of sin and not only was the bread to be made without yeast, as Christ was sinless, but there was also not to be any yeast at all in the house during the Passover feast days.

All who will be saved by the blood of Christ must realize that they have a part to play in their salvation. We are not saved by any good works that we do, but only by the blood and goodness of Christ. But true faith must produce good works, and it must lead to obedience of all God's commands.

The Israelites obeyed the instructions given by Moses and prepared themselves to leave Egypt. Many Egyptians had been led to the conclusion that the God of the

Israelites was the only true God and had learned from their slaves that their first-born sons could be saved if they came into their homes where they would be protected by the blood on the door posts. These Egyptians accepted the protection of God through the hospitality of their slaves, and decided they would also leave Egypt, and serve the God of the Israelites. When the destroying angel came that night, Israelite homes were protected by the sign of blood, a symbol of the saving power of the blood of Christ. But at midnight, there was a great cry throughout Egypt, because as Moses had warned, every home with a son lost their first-born. From the lowliest servant home to the palace, not a single first-born son was spared, if they were not protected by the sign of blood. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and told them to leave Egypt at once. Take your women, children, elderly, and animals, and go serve the Lord as you have said.

## *Chapter 25—The Exodus*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 12:34-51](#); [13-15](#).

Dressed and ready to go, the Israelites had all gathered in the land of Goshen and were waiting for the command to leave. There were about 600,000 men plus women and children, and some organization had already been put into place, so they would be ready to move. The plagues that had greatly strengthened the faith of the Israelites, had caused fear in the Egyptians. That fear had led to faith in some Egyptians, and they were also gathered in Goshen, ready to leave as well. But there was another group, who were simply wanting to escape the plagues, or maybe just looking for excitement, and these would later cause problems in the camp.

In the days leading up to this, Moses had instructed the Israelites to go to their slave masters and ask for items of usefulness or value to pay them for all the free labor they had been forced to give as slaves. By that time the Egyptians were anxious to be rid of the slaves if meant the plagues would stop, so they had gladly gave them many things. This fulfilled the last part of the prophetic vision seen by Abraham, [Genesis 15:14](#) But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. [Genesis 15:14 NLT](#).

When the Israelites were finally given the command to move, they carried the bones of Joseph, which their ancestors had promised to carry back to the land of Canaan. Instead of taking the most direct route toward Canaan which would have taken them through Philistine territory, the Lord directed them south toward the Red Sea. God knew that if they were immediately attacked, they would lose heart and want to run back to Egypt. The Israelites faith was still young and weak and would take time to grow. God directed them by leading with a pillar of cloud in the day, which also provided shade, and a pillar of fire, which provided some warmth and light at night. [Psalm 105:39](#) The LORD spread a cloud above them as a covering and gave them a great fire to light the darkness. [Psalm 105:39 NLT](#).

If God did it for His people in the past, He can do it again, and these verses imply as much. [Isaiah 4:5](#) Then the LORD will provide shade for Mount Zion and all who assemble there. He will provide a canopy of cloud during the day and smoke and flaming fire at night, covering the glorious land. <sup>6</sup> It will be a shelter from daytime heat and a hiding place from storms and rain. [Isaiah 4:5-6 NLT](#).

They had barely started, but some were already getting tired of the endless sand of the desert. Some began to fear that Pharaoh would pursue them with his army, but the cloud continued to lead. Then God instructed Moses to setup camp in a

sheltered place by the Red Sea. God also warned Moses that Pharaoh would chase after them, but His power would be shown in their deliverance.

Meanwhile in Egypt, with short memories of the plagues and even the death of their first-born, Pharaoh and his counselors realized that they had lost their entire nation of slave labor. They couldn't understand why they had so foolishly believed the plagues were caused by God and determined to bring their slaves back. Pharaoh rounded up 600 chariots, as well as soldiers on horseback and on foot, and even brought along priests to ensure the favor of their gods. They realized how weak they must have looked to surrounding nations when they let their slaves go and wanted to make a great show of power when they brought them back.

The Israelites were now camping along the shore of the Red Sea and there were mountains to the south, when suddenly some spotted the flashing reflection of light off chariots and armor, and the cloud of dust of a great army. They immediately realized that their worst fears were coming true as they watched Pharaoh's army get closer and closer. Some turned to God in prayer, but the majority began complaining to Moses. "Was it because there were not enough graves in Egypt, that you brought us into the wilderness to die? Didn't we tell you back then to just leave us alone and not stir up any trouble. Serving the Egyptians was better than dying in the wilderness."

Moses couldn't believe the fear and lack of faith, after so recently having seen the power of God and knowing that He was leading. Moses said, "Don't be afraid, just watch and you will see the power of God save you. Those Egyptians that you see chasing you right now, will not be seen again, ever! It is the Lord Who will fight for you." But with so many people, with so little faith, there began to be a danger of violence among the Israelites. With their fear continuing to rise as they watched the Egyptian army get closer and closer, the cloud suddenly began to move toward the army. The cloud became like a wall of darkness to the Egyptians but was still a pillar of fire and light to the Israelites. Then at God's command, Moses held out his hand toward the sea, and it parted, making a dry path for the Israelites to cross.

The Egyptians kept chasing the Israelites, even following them into the sea. Meanwhile the dark cloud continued slowing them down, and God even made some of their chariot wheels fall off. When morning came, and the Israelites had reached the other shore, the pillar of fire that had been lighting their way, now turned into a barrier that the Egyptians could not pass. Then there was thunder and lightning, and water began to fall from the clouds [[Psalm 77:17-18](#)]. The Egyptians then said, "Let's get out of here because the Lord is fighting for the Israelites." But Moses stretched his hand toward the sea again, and the walls of water came crashing down on them.

As the dead bodies of the Egyptian army started to wash up on the shore, the Israelites began to realize that their slavery was truly over and there was nothing left to fear from Egypt. God alone had saved them with His mighty power, and they then joined Moses in a song of praise to Him.

[Exodus 15:1](#) Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse and rider into the sea. <sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him--my father's God, and I will exalt him! <sup>3</sup> The LORD is a warrior; Yahweh is his name! <sup>4</sup> Pharaoh's chariots and army he has hurled into the sea. The finest of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. <sup>5</sup> The deep waters gushed over them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. <sup>6</sup> "Your right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power. Your right hand, O LORD, smashes the enemy. ... <sup>11</sup> "Who is like you among the gods, O LORD--glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders? ... <sup>13</sup> "With your unfailing love you lead the people you have redeemed. In your might, you guide them to your sacred home. <sup>14</sup> The peoples hear and tremble; anguish grips those who live in Philistia. ... <sup>16</sup> terror and dread fall upon them. The power of your arm makes them lifeless as stone until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you purchased pass by. <sup>17</sup> You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain--the place, O LORD, reserved for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. [Exodus 15:1-6, 11, 13-14, 16-17 NLT](#).

Then Moses' sister Miriam, led in a response: [Exodus 15:21](#) And Miriam sang this song: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse and rider into the sea." [Exodus 15:21 NLT](#).

The song of Moses that was inspired by God, was sung by the Israelites throughout their history. But that song will be sung again when all God's people are saved.

[Revelation 15:2](#) I saw before me what seemed to be a glass sea mixed with fire. And on it stood all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name. They were all holding harps that God had given them. <sup>3</sup> And they were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. [Revelation 15:2-3 NLT](#).

God made a great sacrifice to save us and call us His children, so we should be grateful and praise Him. [Psalm 50:23](#) But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. ... [Psalm 50:23 NLT](#). [Psalm 146:2](#) I will praise the LORD as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath. [Psalm 146:2 NLT](#). [Psalm 67:5](#) May the nations praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you. [Psalm 67:5 NLT](#).

God purposely led the Israelites to the Red Sea, where they could only be saved by His great power. Sometimes we are led by God to where it seems there is no path forward, but if He tells us to go, we should obey, and a path will open for us. Those who will not move forward until they can see a clear path to success, or until they see no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey God's call.

The cloud that was darkness and confusion to the Egyptian army was brightness to the Israelites. To the unbelieving, God's way may seem dark and confusing, but to the one who trusts in Him, it will be light. Sometimes God may lead us through the desert or the sea, but we can be sure that if we follow, it will be what is best for us.

## *Chapter 26—From the Red Sea to Sinai*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 15:22-27](#); [16-18](#).

When the pillar of cloud began to move again, the Israelites followed. As they left the sea behind, the landscape in all directions was dry, barren desert. At first, they were still rejoicing over the defeat of Pharaoh's army, but after 3 days of walking, they had used up their supply of water, and there was no more in sight. Moses was familiar with the area, and knew that the closest water, at Marah, was not suitable for drinking. But when they reached it, a glad shout rang out from the lead, "Water! Water!" But the cheer soon turned to despair when they realized they could not drink the water.

Immediately, they began complaining to Moses, asking why he had brought them this way, forgetting that the cloud had been leading them. Moses turned to God and asked what he should do, and God told him to cut down a particular tree and throw it in the water, and it then it would become drinkable. At that time, God made a promise to the Israelites. [Exodus 15:26](#) He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you." [Exodus 15:26 NLT](#).

From Marah, they traveled to Elim where there were 12 wells and 70 palm trees. After pausing there for a few days, they began moving into wilderness again, and about a month after they had left Egypt, when their supplies began to get low, the Israelites started complaining. Even the leaders and elders joined in on the complaining saying, "We wish God had just killed us in Egypt, where at least we had meat and plenty of bread, but instead you have brought us into the desert to starve us to death."

They were not even to the point of starvation, but they did see that the whole nation would not be able to survive in the wilderness once their supplies were gone. God knew there were difficulties in this transition, but He wanted the Israelites to realize that they could come to Him with their needs, and He would supply them. He had already promised them protection from disease, and considering the miracles performed to get them to this point, it was sinful for them to doubt. It was necessary for them to experience some difficulty, so they would learn to depend on and trust in Him. This would prepare them to take the place of honor among the nations that He intended for them.

The history of Israel during the transition from Egypt to Canaan, with all the doubting and the complaining, was written down for the benefit of God's people for the rest of time. Many read these words and can't imagine how the Israelites

could have been so ungrateful, and so lacking in faith, but when they are faced with hardship or difficulties, they are quick to abandon God or complain. Some are always expecting the worst to happen, and act as if small difficulties are huge problems, and fail to see the many blessings God has already poured out on them. If we would stop to think and realize how much God has given up to save us, and how much He has already done for us, we would realize we are no better than the Israelites were in their desert wanderings. God will not take away all our challenges, but He wants us to let Him help us carry them. [Matthew 11:28](#) Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [Matthew 11:28-29 NLT](#). <sup>1</sup> [Peter 5:7](#) Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. [1 Peter 5:7 NLT](#). We should learn to have a spirit of thankfulness to God. [Psalm 103:1](#) ... Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. <sup>2</sup> Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. [Psalm 103:1-2 NLT](#).

In response to their complaints, God began a daily miraculous supply of food, that would continue until they reached the promised land. He also took the opportunity to use this ongoing miracle to remind them weekly to rest on the Sabbath day, by giving them a double portion on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and none on the 7<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the daily food, God would even provide meat for them this time. Moses assured the people that they would not die of hunger or thirst in the wilderness, and reminded them that when they complained, they were doing it against God. Then he told them to look at the cloud in the distance, and the glory of God appeared in the cloud, brighter and more glorious than the pillar of fire. God revealed Himself this way to impress on them that He was present and was their leader, not Moses, and that they should respect and obey Him.

That evening, quail appeared around the camp, enough for every person to have meat to eat. And the next morning the ground was covered with something that was white like frost and was the size and shape of a coriander seed. The people called it "manna," and Moses said, "This is the bread that God will provide for you each morning. Gather 3 or 4 liters per person and do not try to save any for the next day. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day, gather twice as much as usual, bake and cook it for the next day because on the 7<sup>th</sup> day there will be none. Do not wait too long to gather it each morning because the sun will melt it and it will be gone." The manna could be used like grain, and the bread made from it had a sweet taste, as if it was made with some honey. People who tried to keep some for the next day found that it was bad, and smelled awful, and was even infested with worms. Those who went out to gather it on the Sabbath day went hungry.

The Sabbath day has been set aside since the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation and God has always asked His people to keep it holy. It is a holy day for all people, and not just for the Jews. The 6<sup>th</sup> day should be a day of preparation, when everything is made ready so that the Sabbath day can be kept holy. The keeping of the Sabbath is not an excuse to neglect the sick and suffering, as seen by the example of Jesus, but we should avoid all unnecessary work. It should not be treated as just another day to accomplish things not completed on other days of the week. We would do well to remember the triple miracle that occurred every week when double manna was provided on the preparation day, no manna fell on the Sabbath, and the manna kept from Friday did not go bad. This triple miracle was also proof that keeping the Sabbath holy did not start with the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment later received on Mount Sinai.

The manna from heaven was also a symbol of Jesus who came to give life to the entire world. [John 6:48](#) Yes, I am the bread of life! <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. <sup>50</sup> Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh." [John 6:48-51 NLT](#).

When the Israelites moved on, the place where they set up camp next was called Rephidim. There was no water there, and instead of trusting God to provide it, they went to Moses and started complaining again. [Exodus 17:3](#) But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?" [Exodus 17:3 NLT](#). In doing this, the people were essentially accusing Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them so he could become rich with their possessions. God told Moses to hit the rock at Horeb with his rod and water would come out of it. When he did so, a great stream of water came shooting out of the rock, and it was more than enough for the entire camp.

God didn't directly punish the Israelites for their lack of faith, and bad attitude, but He taught them a lesson by not protecting them from the initial Amalekite attack, which was made against those bringing up the rear because they were struggling to keep up. Moses knew that most of the Israelites were not trained or ready for battle, so he appointed Joshua to hand pick people that he could quickly train and lead on a military response to this cowardly attack. The next day as Joshua was leading his men against the Amalekites, Moses, Aaron, and Hur watched from a nearby hill. They soon discovered that when Moses raised his arm toward heaven, as he did when he was praying, the Israelites did well, but when his hands were down, they retreated. After some time, Moses could no longer hold his arms over his head, so he sat down on a rock and Aaron and Hur each held an arm up until

the sun was setting and the enemy was defeated. In this way, God showed Israel that through their leader Moses, He could give them supernatural strength which allowed them to win, but without His help, they could not win.

The Amalekites were aware of what Israel's God had done to the Egyptians, and they joked about it and boasted they would defeat this nation of slaves and their God that had humbled the nation of Egypt. The Amalekites were very wicked, and their crimes and sins were ripe for punishment, but when they had shamelessly attacked the weak and those who were lagging behind, they sealed their fate and were marked by God for destruction.

Israel was now camped near the home of Jethro, the priest and prince of Midian, who was also the father-in-law of Moses. Jethro now brought his daughter, and two grandsons to reunite them with Moses. Jethro, as a priest joined Moses and the Israelite elders in a sacrifice and ceremony of thanks to God. Moses' father-in-law then stayed with him for a time to watch and see how he was doing. Moses was in charge of more than a million people and not only were there many important decisions to make, but there were also disputes between people, and even the smallest of these matters was brought for him to judge. Moses had thought that judging matters between people would give him the chance to teach them about the law of God, but his father-in-law saw that it was too much and that he would burn out at this rate. He counseled Moses to set up people to help with the administration of the nation. They should be honest God-fearing people, who are not greedy and who would not take bribes. There should be layers, with administrators or judges over fewer people, and if they could not resolve the dispute, they could take it to the next level, and so on, until finally the most difficult issues would be brought to Moses. He humbly accepted this counsel from his father-in-law, and it was the start of an orderly, law-abiding society.

From Rephidim, the Israelites followed the cloud, slowly making their way through flat barren desert, and steep, rocky terrain, until they reached Mount Sinai. The cloud then settled on top of the mountain, but the people did not follow it up. Here, at the base of the majestic and rugged mountain, where the Israelites might feel small, they would receive God's law, written on stone by none other than Himself. This is the place God chose to impress the people of Israel with the importance of His law, by speaking it with His own voice for all of them to hear. For too long, they had been degraded as slaves, and surrounded by idolatry, and God was going to lift the entire nation to a higher level of existence, by giving them a better knowledge of Himself through His law.

## *Chapter 27—The Law Given to Israel*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 19-24](#).

Israel arrived at Sinai in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month after leaving Egypt. Right after camp was set up, God called Moses to go up the mountain to meet with Him. When Moses got close to the cloud that was hiding God's presence, he stopped, and God said to him, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you as an eagle flying through the air. Now if Israel will obey Me and keep their side of our agreement, they will be like a special treasure for Me among all the nations of the earth. They will all be holy and will minister as priests to all the nations." Moses went back down the mountain and told the elders what God had said, and they responded, "We will do everything that God asks." By doing this, they were agreeing to having God as their King.

Moses went back up the mountain, and God said to him, "I have come close to you in this thick cloud, and the people will hear Me speaking to you, so that they will always believe you and respect you." Up to this time, they had been quick to complain to Moses, even blaming him for their difficulties, so God was honoring him in front of the Israelites so that they would have confidence in whatever he said to them.

God was now about to speak His law in the hearing of all the Israelites, and it would be done in a way to impress them with His holiness, and how they must be reverent in His presence. God instructed Moses, to prepare the people, by having them wash their clothes and their bodies, and to clean up the camp. They were also to humble themselves, and fast and pray that their hearts would be cleansed from sin. Then on the third day, He would come closer and speak His law to all of them. A fence was built between the people and the mountain so that no person or animal would get too close, because if they did, they would instantly be killed.

On the third day the cloud that had settled on the top of the mountain got thicker and darker and covered the entire mountain. A trumpet was heard calling the attention of the people and Moses brought them closer to the base of the mountain. Lightning and thunder were coming from the cloud, and the mountain was shaking and smoking, because the Lord had come down on the mountain. The glory of the God was like a terrible fire on the top of the mountain, and the people were scared and fell on their faces before the Lord. [Hebrews 12:21](#) Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, "I am terrified and trembling." [Hebrews 12:21 NLT](#).

God was surrounded by angels that had accompanied Him for this great event [[Deuteronomy 33:2-3](#)]. Finally, everything became very quiet and still, then the

voice of God was heard saying, "I am Jehovah your God that brought you out of Egypt and rescued you from slavery."

1. *You shall have no other god before Me.*

The law giver, Who was not made by any other, because He has always existed, the Creator of all things, is the only being entitled to receive worship. We should never respect, love, or worship anything or anyone above God.

2. *You shall not make an image to represent a god or make anything that looks like something in the sky, or the land, or the water, and bow down to it and worship it. I, Jehovah, am a Jealous God, and I can see the effects of the sins of the parents on the children to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation of those who hate Me, but I show mercy to those who love Me and keep my commandments.*

It is sin to worship any object or image, even if it is meant to represent or symbolize the true God. Many heathens claimed that their idols represented God, but this commandment declares that to be sin. Anything made to represent the infinite, all powerful, everlasting God, with earthly material and constructed by human hands would lower the idea of God in the thoughts and mind of the worshipper. Idolatry is spiritual adultery, and even as a person would not want their marriage partner to be intimate with someone else, God does not want us to worship anything other than Him. God does not punish children for the sins of the parents, but through inheritance, and training or by example, children will often suffer the consequences of the sins of their parents, especially if they follow in their footsteps and commit the same sins. On the other hand, those who keep God's commandments and love Him, even those whose parents were great sinners, will receive His mercy.

3. *You shall not use the name of Jehovah your God in vain, and whoever does will be guilty of sin.*

This commandment covers multiple cases that usually involve using God's name, for anything but addressing Him in reverence and worship. First swearing or cursing very often involves using God's name or names in vain. Secondly, swearing to do something in God's name is also prohibited. Thirdly, using the name of God in common conversation, in ways not meant to honor or respect Him, dishonors Him. The extremely common, irreverent use of the expression "oh my god" comes to mind in this case. It would do well for us to remember the words of this Psalm: [Psalm 111:9](#) ... What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has! [Psalm 111:9 NLT](#).

4. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You should do your work on the other 6 days of the week, but the 7<sup>th</sup> day is the Sabbath of Jehovah, your God. On that day, you should not do any work, your children should not do any work, your servants should not do any work, your animals should not be made to work, even the stranger on your property should not do any work. Because in 6 days, Jehovah made the sky,*

*earth, sea, and everything in them, and then He rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, and the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Even though the commandments were given to the Jews, the Sabbath commandment began at creation. It should help us to remember that Jehovah created all things. All who keep the Sabbath holy show that they are worshippers of Jehovah. The fourth commandment is the only one that contains both the proper name, Jehovah, and His title, Creator of all things, showing He has the right to make or pass the law. This makes the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment like a seal or signature, which has always been needed to put laws into effect. For example, kings, presidents, and governors, always sign laws before they are enforced in their domains. The interpretation of the type of work that is to be avoided, can be found in examples and writings from other parts of the Bible. Clearly by the example of Jesus, acts of healing and mercy are allowed even if they are considered work. The prophet Isaiah gives another perspective on the keeping of the Sabbath. [Isaiah 58:13](#) "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD's holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken!" [Isaiah 58:13-14 NLT](#).

5. *Honor your father and mother so that you will live long in the land that Jehovah your God gives you.*

The life cycle of human beings includes a very helpless beginning which would be impossible to survive without care from parents. It is a unique relationship, in which is it God's plan to have parents represent Him to their very young children, and to love, guide, and train them. The child who rejects the authority and training of their parent is rejecting the authority of God, and when the child is grown, they are to continue honoring and respecting their parents. When parents grow old, the care relationship is reversed, and God commands children to care for their aging parents. This commandment is different from all the others in that there is a reward promised for keeping it [[Ephesians 6:2](#)]. In a sense, the promise may be a natural result of an entire nation of people who show the greatest respect and love for their parents and to a lesser degree, respect for all people, especially elders and those in authority. The promise can also apply to eternal life in the new earth.

6. *Do not kill.*

Jesus taught a much broader view of this commandment when He said, [Matthew 5:22](#) ... if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. [Matthew 5:22 NLT](#). In a similar

way this command can also cover acts that lead to the loss of years of life for others, an example being hard or excessive forced labor.

7. *Do not commit adultery.*

Adultery is the act of sex or intimacy with a person married to someone else, but like the previous command, it is really much broader. According to Jesus, it also includes impure thoughts toward another. [Matthew 5:28](#) But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [Matthew 5:28 NLT](#).

8. *Do not steal.*

Once again, this command is extended to cover much more than the simple act of taking something that doesn't belong to you. It includes slavery, where a person's freedom is being stolen. It would cover things taken after defeating another in war. But it would also cover things such as unfair trade or not returning what is borrowed. It even includes taking advantage of the ignorant, weak, or helpless.

9. *Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

When accusing someone of a crime in a court of law, the testimony has the potential to ruin or even end a person's life. In a very real sense, giving a false testimony could be the same as murder. But like all the other commandments, this one applies not only to making false statements in court but lying or misleading in general. Communicating a lie by a look or a hand gesture can lead to the same effect as if the untruth were spoken. Any and every attempt to hide the truth, especially to hurt others, breaks this commandment.

10. *Do not covet your neighbor's house, wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to him.*

Most sinful acts start with desire, so breaking this commandment is usually the first step in breaking any of 6-9. If we can learn to be content with what we have, we will be less likely to sin against our neighbor.

It was a great honor for Israel to be the nation that received the Law of God, and to be the ones to preserve and share it. It was not meant to be kept secret, but to be shared with the entire world. The Law that explained how man should relate to God and each other was split into 10 short commands or statements. But the entire law could even be condensed into fewer words as spoken by a lawyer and approved by Jesus. [Luke 10:27](#) The man answered, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" [Luke 10:27 NLT](#).

The Israelites were terrified of the display put on by God, and it was done on purpose so they would not forget, but also so they would have a sense of the

importance, and holiness of the law. [Exodus 20:19](#) And they said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us, or we will die!" [Exodus 20:19 NLT](#). Then the people watched as Moses went close to the dark cloud where God was. In his private meeting with God, Moses received details about how people should be punished for breaking the law, and God also gave more detailed laws, which were specific applications of the 10 commandments.

At that time slavery was a common thing, and the Israelites would now most likely adopt the practice of having slaves, and God wanted to make sure they knew that cruel treatment of slaves was not acceptable. One common case was that if someone was in debt and could not repay, a judge could condemn them to being a slave to work off the debt. One of the first laws, while not simply doing away with the personal responsibility to pay back debts, was to limit the amount of time a person could be enslaved. The Israelites were to have a 7-year cycle, and the longest an Israelite could be kept in slavery was 6 years, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> they were to be set free. Slaves who were not Israelites did not benefit from the 7-year cycle, but laws were given to make sure they were treated like human beings. If a slave was beaten to death, the master must be punished. If a slave is permanently injured by his master, he must be set free. The sentence, or punishment for kidnapping, intentional murder, and rebellion against the authority of parents, was death.

Widows and orphans were especially helpless, and God included laws about how they were to be treated. If they were treated badly in any way and cry out to God, He would get angry with their oppressors, and kill them with the sword, making their wives widows and their children fatherless. Foreigners who came to live among them should not be treated poorly or unfairly. Charging interest when loaning money to the poor was forbidden. Keeping a poor man's coat as collateral for a loan overnight was not allowed, since it might be his only bed covering. If someone stole something they had to repay twice as much. Rulers and judges must be respected, and they in turn must be fair and not take bribes.

3 yearly feasts were established that all men were required to attend. These were times that they brought an offering to show their gratitude for the blessings of the Lord.

All these laws or requirements God gave to the Israelites through Moses were to become part of their culture. They were designed to make them a nation of holy people, who were worthy to represent a holy God. The laws were all written down by Moses, and together with the 10 commandments, would be the founding laws of the nation. The Israelites were required to keep these laws to receive the blessings God had promised the nation. The presence of God was promised on their journey

through the wilderness, and it was Christ Himself that was with them in the pillar of fire and cloud.

When Moses came down the mountain, he read all these words to the people, and they all answered together saying, "All that Jehovah requires, we will do." Then in a more formal ceremony with 12 pillars, an altar, and sacrifices brought by young men who were chosen, the laws which were called the book of the covenant were read in the presence of all the people. Again, the people all answered together, "All that Jehovah requires we will do, and obey." Then Moses sprinkled blood on the book and the people.

Next, the leaders of the nation under God, would be identified, so that the people would know God had chosen them. Moses was told to bring Aaron, his sons, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 elders up onto the mountain. On the mountain, the Spirit of God rested on them, and they were honored to see the glory of God, and what looked like a floor made of sapphire. After they came back down the mountain, God told Moses to go back up the mountain with Joshua, and to leave Aaron, Hur and the 70 elders in charge. On the mountain Moses waited for 6 days, for further instruction from God. During the time he was patiently waiting, he prepared himself through meditation and prayer to meet his Maker. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, which was the Sabbath, Moses was called to go up into the cloud, while Joshua waited. Moses was then in the cloud with God for 40 days, and during the entire time, he did not eat anything.

While Moses was in the cloud with God, he was given detailed instructions for building a sanctuary, where God's presence could be seen. Moses was again reminded of the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy, and God told him it would be a sign between Him and Israel forever. He was also told that if any person did not keep the Sabbath holy, they should be cut off from their people, and if anyone did work on the Sabbath, they must be killed. Finally, at the end of the 40 days, God gave Moses the two stone tablets on which He had written, the 10 commandments.

The Israelites were honored above all other nations to have God in their presence, and to have Him as their king. [Exodus 29:43](#) I will meet the people of Israel there, in the place made holy by my glorious presence. ... <sup>45</sup> Then I will live among the people of Israel and be their God, [Exodus 29:43, 45 NLT](#). The 10 commandments were a physical symbol of God's authority, written by His own hand on 2 tablets of stone. They would be kept in the most holy place in the sanctuary, which would be the center of the nation's worship.

In a few short months, Israel had gone from a nation of slaves, to being subjects of the King of kings. They had been chosen for a special purpose, which was to

preserve a knowledge of God in the world, and to be the recipient and the keeper of His law. If Israel would be faithful to their King and keep His laws, He would make them greater than all other nations, He would defend them, and they would be an example of the superiority of worshipping God over all other false religions.

## *Chapter 28—Idolatry at Sinai*

This chapter is based on [Exodus 32-34](#)

While Moses was up on the mountain for 40 days, the Israelites could see the thick, dark cloud and the lightning from God's presence, but they could not see Moses. They could have been spending this time to think about the laws that they had so recently received from God and preparing themselves for the next instructions they would hear when Moses returned. But many were not doing this, especially the multitude of non-Israelites that had tagged along in the Exodus from Egypt. They began to get restless and wondered what was taking Moses so long to return. Some wanted to get moving forward toward the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey, and some even wanted to return to Egypt.

The Egyptians had been accustomed to having idols and images that represented their gods, and now that Moses was gone, they wanted something to worship and bow down to. But since they had no idea what God looked like; they suggested an idol of a calf would do, after all that was something they were used to from Egypt. The leaders of this movement came to Aaron, and said that Moses was gone, and the cloud that was leading was not moving anymore. So, they demanded that he make an idol for them to worship, and they would claim they were still worshipping Jehovah.

Aaron was not someone who could resist as a mob of people pressed in on him, demanding action that he did not want to take. Eventually many Israelites joined the mob and a few who resisted lost their lives. The weakness he showed in putting down this movement only made it worse, and soon he was afraid for his life. Instead of risking his life, he gave in to the demands of the mob and told them to bring their golden jewelry, which he melted down and formed into an image of a calf. When he saw that the mob was pleased with the idol he had made for them, he went further and made an altar and proclaimed that there would be a feast to the Lord the next day. Some justified this evil action by claiming it was "a feast to the Lord," but they all gave themselves up to overeating and sinful sexual activities.

Many false religions are attractive because they permit or even promote sinful pleasures, while claiming them to be a form of worship. And there are plenty of Aarons in positions of religious leadership, that bless and even lead out in these sinful actions. It was barely 40 days since the Israelites had pledged to do all that the Lord commanded, including not worshipping images of Him or other gods. The glory of God was so near, yet they asked for another god.

Moses was told by God that there was sin in the camp, and that he should go down right away. He even went as far as to say to Moses, "your people, that you brought

up out of the land of Egypt have sinned and disobeyed My commands." God could have sent Moses down right at the beginning, to support Aaron, and prevent the whole thing from even happening. But that wouldn't have changed the hearts and intentions of the leaders of the revolt, and their punishment would be a lesson and a warning of how this kind of open sin against God would be handled.

Before Moses left, God tested him, by say, "Don't bother going down there now, let Me just destroy them all and replace them with you and your descendants." But Moses rose to the challenge, and he pleaded with God to spare the people. He said, "Why are You so angry with Your people, that You brought out of Egypt, with Your miraculous power?" God sounded like He had disowned Israel by calling them Moses' people, but Moses humbly turned down that position by calling them God's people. Moses continued his reasoning with God by saying, "Do You want the Egyptians to say God was just playing with His people, by bringing them out of Egypt, because He was just going to kill them all in the mountains and the desert?"

Many nations had heard about what happened in Egypt as the slaves left, and all were watching to see what would become of this new nation of Israel. If they were all killed, God would be dishonored, and most would then fear, and not want anything to do with this God. It was a great honor to be chosen by God, but it came with a great responsibility to make other nations want to praise Him. Moses had passed the test, and God was pleased with him.

As Moses and Joshua came down the mountain, they heard shouts and cries, and Joshua thought it must be a battle. But Moses knew what was going on because God had told him, and he told Joshua, it is the sound of singing and dancing. Even though he had been warned by God, when they were close enough to see what was happening, Moses got very angry when he saw the dancing, and feasting, around the golden calf. Reacting in horror, he threw down the two tablets of the law that he was carrying. His action symbolized the broken covenant, since Israel had broken their side of the agreement. Then Moses grabbed the idol and threw it into a fire, and after it had melted down, he ground up the gold and threw it into a stream, and made the people drink it. This showed how worthless and helpless the image of the calf they were worshipping really was.

Moses then called Aaron and asked, "What did these people do to you, that you brought this great sin on them?" Aaron said to Moses, "Please don't get too angry with me my lord, you know what troublemakers these people can be. They said, 'Make us a god to lead us because we don't know what has become of this Moses that brought us out of Egypt.' So, I told them to bring me their golden jewelry, and when I threw it in the fire, this calf miraculously came out." Aaron's sin was worse than the people's because he had been blessed and honored so much by God. He

who had even been chosen by God to be the spokesman for Moses, had used his voice to declare the idolatrous feast to the Lord. God was ready to punish Aaron with death, but Moses interceded for him, and God spared his life [[Deuteronomy 9:20](#)].

If Aaron had stood firm from the beginning, not worrying about what would happen to him, he could have stopped the great sin and rebellion against God from happening. The sins that will receive the worst punishment will be by those who encourage and lead others into sin. Even though God did not destroy the entire nation of Israel, there was still rebellion that needed to be dealt with, quickly, before it spread. When Moses made a general call asking, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The entire tribe of Levi came to him, with none of them having taken part in the idolatrous rebellion. Some from other tribes, even including some who had sinned but repented, also came to the Lord's side. But there was a group composed mostly of the mixed multitude, who stubbornly rejected the call. Moses then commanded those who had not participated in the idol worship to take their swords and go kill those who stubbornly refused to repent. It was a terrible job asked of God, but the Levites obeyed and killed 3000 people that day, but anyone who had repented was spared. In the future, when Israel condemned idol worship, no one could point to the golden calf incident and say that God allowed it. In the future, the tribe of Levi would be blessed and honored for their faithfulness and obedience.

Over and over, it has been shown that mercifully allowing the sinner to continue in their sin leads to greater and greater wickedness. Cain, the first murderer, was allowed to live, and was even protected, and he became the father of the evil generations before the flood. The people before the flood were a demonstration that long life for the sinner, leads to increased wickedness. If the sin at Sinai had been ignored, those rebels would have continued doing worse and worse things until they became as wicked as those before the flood. If that had happened, and spread throughout the entire camp, God would not have protected Israel, and they would have been conquered by surrounding nations.

There were many in Israel who had sinned but repented, and now they feared that they might also be punished. But Moses said, "Yes, you have sinned greatly, but I will go up the mountain and ask God to forgive you." When Moses talked to God, he humbly begged for their forgiveness and even said, "If they cannot be forgiven, then take my name out of Your book." [Moses was talking about the book of life, which has the names of all who have ever accepted the gift of forgiveness and salvation from God.] If any of these choose to continue sinning, and ignore the Holy Spirit, then eventually their names will be removed from the book.

After the 3000 rebels and their leaders were killed, God sent a plague and also ordered the tent that had been used as the center of worship, to be moved out of the camp. This showed that God had taken His presence away from them and left them wondering if God was preparing to destroy them. But Moses then told them that all who were truly sorry and wished to repent and confess their sins should meet there. The people watched to see if God would meet them there and when Moses entered and they saw the cloud settle over the tent, they were relieved to know that God had not abandoned them, and they worshipped Him.

Now Moses knew there was no way he could take the people to the promised land without God's help, and he wanted to know more clearly what to do, and he wanted more assurance that God would stay with them. God said, "My presence will go with you," but Moses wanted more assurance, and he had more questions. Moses also wanted to know how separate the Israelites would be from everyone else on the earth. God didn't really answer his last question, but said, "I will do what you ask, because you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name." But Moses pressed for more, finally daring to even ask if he could see God's glory. God answered, "I will let you see My goodness, but no man can see My face and live."

God told Moses to go up the mountain again, and to bring with him two tablets of stone like the ones he broke. On the mountain, while he was sheltered in a crack in the rock, with the hand of God shielding him, God allowed Moses to see His glory and his goodness. [Exodus 34:6](#) The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. <sup>7</sup> I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected--even children in the third and fourth generations." [Exodus 34:6-7 NLT](#). This experience gave Moses the confidence he needed more than any human skill or learning. He bowed down to the ground and worshipped God and asked Him if He could forgive the Israelites and take them back. Moses spent another 40 days on the mountain and did not eat or drink, and in that time, God renewed His covenant with Israel, and He re-wrote the 10 commandments on the tablets of stone that Moses brought.

When Moses finally came down the mountain, after having seen the goodness and glory of God, and having spent 40 days so close to Him, his face shined with light. Even Aaron shrank back, and everyone was afraid to be near him. Moses tried to reassure them that God had forgiven them and renewed the covenant, but with their guilty conscience, there were still afraid of the heavenly light. When he realized what they were afraid of, from then on whenever he came back from talking to

God, he covered his face with a veil. This brightness on the face of Moses, was meant to impress Israel with the sacredness of the law, and the glory of the good news revealed through Christ. During the 40 days on the mountain, Moses was also shown how all the ceremonies and sacrifices that would become part of their culture, were all symbols of the sacrifice of Christ. The glory on the face of Moses, reflected the blessings God's commandment keepers would receive with Christ as their priest. The closer we get to God, the more we will know what He wants, and when we do these things, we will become more like Him.

As Moses had to cover the glory of God radiating from his face so the people could look at him, so Christ had to cover His glory with humanity so that men could survive in His presence. He humbled Himself, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" [[Romans 8:3](#)], so that He could save us from sin.

## *Chapter 29—Satan's Hatred of the Law*

Satan's battle against the law of God began in heaven, and for a time he seemed to be succeeding, as many angels joined with him. But he suffered a defeat when he was thrown out of heaven. Next, he won a battle when he succeeded in getting humanity to disobey God, and join him in sin, but he lost again when God revealed the plan of salvation for the human race. Satan accused God of being responsible for misery and death, because He made it possible for humanity to choose to sin. He won again, when people listened to him, and rejected God for this argument. But the ability to choose evil is necessary if someone is truly free to choose. But even after sin, God has made it possible to resist evil, and it is never the only option.

As the population of the earth grew, it seemed that Satan had gain victory over almost everyone, but the infinite wisdom of God chose to cleanse the earth with a flood and start over with one family. Over time after the flood, most of the descendants of Noah even rebelled against God. Then He made a covenant with Abraham next, but even the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation later, the sons of Jacob married heathen women and were tempted to worship their idols. But Joseph was faithful to God, so Satan used the envy of his brothers to motivate them to persecute him. They succeeded in getting rid of him by selling him into slavery in Egypt, but God used that to bring a knowledge of Himself to the people of Egypt. The Israelites prospered in Egypt and their population grew, and when they were faithful to God, they were able to share a knowledge of Him to the Egyptians. But Satan worked through the religion and priests of Egypt to begin persecution and slavery of the Israelites.

When Moses began his work and went before Pharaoh, the king, thinking he had the upper hand over the Hebrews said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him? I don't know Jehovah and I will not let the Israelites go free." God then demonstrated His power over the Egyptians through the plagues, one at a time so the people could have time to see His power and decide how they would respond. And Pharaoh's stubbornness caused a knowledge of the power of God to spread, and many Egyptians even joined with Israel in worshipping Jehovah.

God brought the family of Jacob to Egypt, because through the protection of Joseph, they could remain a distinct people and have less heathen influence. This provided a good environment for them to grow into a nation. The cruelty and oppression by the idolatrous Egyptians in the later part of their time in Egypt, should have inspired the Israelites to reject idol worship and choose Jehovah, the God of their fathers. When they were under the power of the Egyptians, they were

not allowed to perform animal sacrifices because of the beliefs the Egyptians held about some of those animals.

Satan was aware of the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he hoped to prevent the fulfillment of God's promises to them by making them forget about Jehovah. When the plagues began, Satan at first tried to discredit them with magic, but he only succeeded in making power of God known not only among the Israelites but in all of Egypt and the surrounding lands.

Of course, God succeeded in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. [Psalm 105:43](#) So he brought his people out of Egypt with joy, his chosen ones with rejoicing. <sup>44</sup> He gave his people the lands of pagan nations, and they harvested crops that others had planted. <sup>45</sup> All this happened so they would follow his decrees and obey his instructions. Praise the LORD! [Psalm 105:43-45 NLT](#). Jehovah rescued them from slavery so He could bring them to a good land, where He would protect them from enemies, as a hen protects her chicks under her wings. In exchange for all Jehovah would do for them, they were to have no other gods, and He would make His name glorious on the earth through them.

After failing to prevent the release of the Israelites from Egypt, Satan attacked them by enticing them to rebel against God by worshipping idols. It mattered not that they even thought they were worshipping Jehovah in the form of a golden calf, because just the act of worshipping something that looked like a common animal, made with human hands, lowered their reverence and understanding of God. By this incident, Satan hoped to ruin God's plan for Israel, and hence prevent the formation of a nation based on God's law. But Satan lost again, because there were still some who remained faithful to God, and those who were truly repentant, were mercifully pardoned by God.

Satan's fight with God began in heaven over the law and it continues today. If he can get people to worship images, and idols, they will be having other gods before Him, or they will have less reverence for Him. If he can get them to ignore the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, they will forget the reason God can claim reverence and worship in the first place, which is because He is the Creator of all things. If the Sabbath had always been kept by all people, there would be no atheist [a person who doesn't believe in the existence of God] or idol worshipper. The Israelites were forced to break the Sabbath by their slave masters in Egypt, so they mostly lost a knowledge of it, and the benefits of it that were just mentioned. When people forget their Creator, they have less power to resist the devil.

But Satan doesn't stop with just attacking the first 4 commandments. If he can lead people to disrespect their parents, they will also have less respect for authority, including the authority of God. This commandment did not represent the usual

behavior among other nations. In some, parents were abandoned or killed when they could no longer take care of themselves. In others, when the father died, the mother was treated with very little respect and was made to obey the oldest son. When the Israelites strayed from obeying God's commands, they broke the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment as well and became more like other nations regarding respect for parents.

As soon as he had power over humanity, Satan led them to hate and kill each other. Jesus called him a murderer from the beginning [[John 8:44](#)]. But Satan went even further, by making murder part of religion. He got people to believe that God or other gods required sacrifices to gain their favor, and what bigger sacrifice can be made than that of a human being. As it turns out there was an even bigger sacrifice than that of another human life, and it was sacrificing their own children. One practice that was developed was to pass their children through fire in front of their idols. If the child survived unharmed, they were thought to be favored by the god, and from that point forward, that child was allowed to do anything they wished and never punished. If the child was burned, they believed that the god required the life of the child as a sacrifice.

Breaking of the 7th commandment was also integrated into heathen religions. Sexual acts that might normally not be done would become part of their worship. The use of temple prostitutes was a common practice among many heathen religions, and the gods themselves were said to have impure sexual passions. Polygamy, which is the practice of having multiple wives, was a very common practice in ancient times. Even though it was one of the things that led to the destruction of the world through the flood, it continued after the flood and became very common again. Satan realized very early on that this was a good way to attack the sacredness of marriage, and as a result to harm the family unit.

From the beginning of his rebellion, Satan has tried to get others to believe a false idea of God's character, and to break His law. He was very successful at this even among the unfallen angels, and through Adam and Eve, the whole human race became sinners. But Satan is clever and doesn't openly attack God and His law. He hides his purpose, and makes his suggestions seem innocent and even beneficial by mixing truth with error. But God provided a way for sinful man to resist their sinful nature and become obedient to His law. In every age He has had people who have His law in their heart.

A time is coming when Satan's deceptions will be exposed for all to see. Everyone will admit that God and His law are good, and that He has been fair. [Isaiah 26:21](#) Look! The LORD is coming from heaven to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will no longer hide those who have been killed. They will be brought out

for all to see. [Isaiah 26:21 NLT](#). [Malachi 3:2](#) "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes.

[Malachi 3:2 NLT](#). Even as a trumpet sound was used to call Israel to the foot of the mountain to hear God's law, the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God will call both the living and the dead from all ages to the judgment. In that day, Christ will come, with all the holy angels, seated on the throne of glory and everyone will be gathered before Him. The glory of Christ and the angels will be greater than at that time when He spoke the law from Sinai.

[Psalm 50:3](#) Our God approaches, and he is not silent. Fire devours everything in his way, and a great storm rages around him. <sup>4</sup> He calls on the heavens above and earth below to witness the judgment of his people. [Psalm 50:3-4 NLT](#). [2 Thessalonians 1:7](#) ... And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, <sup>8</sup> in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. [2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 NLT](#). [Hebrews 12:26](#) ... "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." [Hebrews 12:26 NLT](#). [Jeremiah 25:30](#) ... "The LORD will roar against his own land from his holy dwelling in heaven. He will shout like those who tread grapes; he will shout against everyone on earth. ... [Jeremiah 25:30 NLT](#). [Joel 3:16](#) ... the heavens and the earth will shake. ... [Joel 3:16 NLT](#). [Isaiah 24:20](#) The earth staggers like a drunk. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for the guilt of its rebellion is very heavy. [Isaiah 24:20 NLT](#).

The Israelites could not even bear to look at the glory of God reflected off the face of Moses. How much less will sinners be able to look at His glory when he appears with all the angels. At that time, those who had ignored or rejected God's law will try to hide from the face of Christ on the throne. [Revelation 6:15](#) Then everyone--the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person--all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. [Revelation 6:15-16 NLT](#). But that day which is a terror to some will be a day of joy for others.

In the end, the day will come when Satan and all sinners who have not repented will be destroyed. [Malachi 4:1](#) The LORD of Heaven's Armies says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. On that day the arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw. They will be consumed--roots, branches, and all. [Malachi 4:1 NLT](#). [Psalm 9:5](#) You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have erased their names forever. [Psalm 9:5 NLT](#).

When the earth is cleansed from sin, it will be recreated. [Daniel 7:18](#) But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever." [Daniel 7:18 NLT](#). [Psalm 113:3](#) Everywhere--from east to west--praise the name of the LORD. [Psalm 113:3 NLT](#). [Zechariah 14:9](#) And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one LORD--his name alone will be worshiped. [Zechariah 14:9 NLT](#). [Psalm 119:89](#) ... Your eternal word, O LORD, stands firm in heaven. [Psalm 119:89 NLT](#). [Psalm 111:7](#) All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy. <sup>8</sup> They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity. [Psalm 111:7-8 NLT](#). In those days, the law that Satan hated will be honored throughout the sinless universe.

## ***Chapter 30—The Tabernacle and Its Services***

This chapter is based on [Exodus 25-40](#); [Leviticus 4, 16](#).

When Moses was on the mountain, God told him to make a sanctuary, where He would live among them. He gave very detailed instructions for the construction of it, and he specifically named Bezalel, and Aholiab, to lead out in the work. God gave them special knowledge and ability through His Spirit, to work with gold, silver, bronze, jewels, wood carving, and all other areas of craftsmanship [[Exodus 31:1-6](#)].

The holy sanctuary made with human hands, would be a scaled down copy of the temple in heaven [[Hebrews 9:23-24](#)]. Before the construction could begin, a large amount of precious and valuable material needed to be collected. These supplies were to be collected as offerings from the people, and God made it clear that no one was forced to give. But everyone wanted to give, and they brought bracelets, earrings, rings, and all kinds of gold jewelry. They also brought acacia wood and items of silver and brass, as well as blue, purple, and scarlet fine linen. The rulers brought gemstones for the ephod and breastplate that the high priest would wear, as well as spices and oil for burning, anointing, and for making incense. Even after the construction began, donations kept coming until Moses had to tell everyone to stop giving because they had more than enough. We should also give generously when a house of God is being built, because He is dishonored if the building is left in debt for long.

The tabernacle was designed to be movable, so it was not too big, and it could be taken apart. The walls were made of planks of acacia wood that were covered with gold and interlocked with silver sockets. The size of the building was about 54 feet long, and 18 feet in width and height. The inside walls and ceiling were draped with blue, purple, and scarlet fine linen, and the outer layers of the roof were material woven from goat hair, and a couple layers of animal skin, or leather. The interior would be divided into two compartments with an especially beautiful curtain also called a veil, hanging from gold pillars. The linen curtains were embroidered with gold and silver images of cherubim [a type of angel].

A wall or curtain of fine linen hanging on brass pillars surrounded a courtyard for the sanctuary. The sanctuary was twice as tall as the courtyard wall, so it could be seen by all, and the entrance to it would face east. In the courtyard would be the bronze altar for burnt offerings. It had horns on the four corners on which blood from the sacrifices would be sprinkled. Between the altar and the sanctuary would be a laver also made of bronze. The laver was probably like a large birdbath that

would hold water for the priests to wash their hands and feet before entering the sanctuary.

Inside the sanctuary, the larger room was called the holy place and had 3 things in it, a table for showbread, a 7-branch candlestick, and an altar of incense. Standing in the doorway, the table with the showbread was on the right, and the candlestick on the left. At the opposite end of the room, just in front of the veil separating the holy and most holy places was the altar of incense.

Showbread was the name given to the bread that was to be always present in the sanctuary, replaced once a week on Sabbath. There were 12 pieces, arranged in 2 stacks, and were to be eaten by priests after they were removed.

The candlestick was an oil lampstand with a central stick with 3 branches on each side. It was made of pure gold and formed with almond blossoms, and flowers. The lamps were to be kept burning all the time.

The altar of incense was gold with horns on the corners, and a priest would burn incense on it every morning and evening. Blood from some sin offerings were smeared on the horns, and it was sprinkled with blood on the yearly Day of Atonement. The fire for burning the incense was kindled by God Himself and had to be preserved.

The smaller room in the sanctuary was called the most holy place, or the holy of holies. It was shaped like a cube with the height of the walls being the same as the sides of the room. In the center of the room was the ark, a box made of acacia wood and completely covered with gold. The ark was to hold the two tablets of stone with the 10 commandments that were written by God Himself. It was also called the ark of the covenant because the 10 commandments were the foundation of the covenant between God and Israel. The lid for the ark was called the mercy seat and was solid gold with two cherubim on top of it. Wings from each cherub were touching the other above and the other wings were covering the body [[Ezekiel 1:11](#)]. The two cherubim were looking inward and toward the ark where the 10 commandments would be kept, showing the reverence that angels have for the law of God.

The presence of God would be made known above the mercy seat between the two cherubim. At times the actual voice of God would be heard from the mercy seat, letting His will be known. At other times a light on the angel on the right would indicate a yes answer, and a shadow on the angel on the left a no. By the law of God in the ark, we are all sinners, but above the law was the mercy seat, which gives forgiveness to the repentant sinner. [Psalm 85:10](#) Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed! [Psalm 85:10 NLT](#).

It took about 6 months to complete the work, and it was beautiful, almost beyond description. Light from the golden candlestick reflected off the golden furniture and walls. Colorful curtains with gold embroidered angels seemed to glow with reflected light. In the most holy place was the ark with the carved cherubim, covered with gold, and glowing with the presence of God from the mercy seat. Yet it was all like a dim reflection of the temple in heaven, where God is working for the salvation of humanity.

When the work was completed to the satisfaction of Moses, and everything was assembled, everyone watched and waited to see what God would do next. The pillar of cloud moved over the sanctuary, and then descended on it, and the glory of God filled the sanctuary, and even Moses could not enter it. Then the people knew that God had accepted and approved of the work of their hands, and they were very happy.

From the beginning the oldest son had the birthright and was to be the priest of the family. Beginning with the sanctuary, God's plan was to accept the tribe of Levi in place of firstborn from all the tribes, to work in the temple service. This was a reward for their faithfulness to Him when many Israelites worshipped the golden calf. But the priesthood was to be restricted to Aaron and his descendants. Only the priests were allowed to offer sacrifices at the temple, or burn incense, or even enter the sanctuary. So, after they were dedicated, the furniture that went inside the sanctuary would always be covered when the sanctuary was being moved. Once covered, the Levites could carry them.

Priests were to wear special "holy" clothes that would be like a uniform when they worked in the sanctuary. It was to be white linen, woven in one piece, that covered the legs down to the feet. There was to be a white linen girdle, or belt, that had blue, purple, and red embroidery. On his head, he wore a linen turban. Even as Moses was instructed to remove his shoes at the burning bush, so, the priests were not to wear shoes into the sanctuary. In fact, they were even required to wash their hands and feet before entering the sanctuary or even sacrificing on the altar of burnt offerings. The lesson from the washing was that all sin was to be put away from anyone entering the presence of God.

There were to be multiple priests, all descendants of Aaron at any given time, but only one high priest, starting with Aaron himself. The uniform of the high priests was much more elaborate than that of the regular priest. On top of the regular priestly uniform, he wore a blue overcoat, also woven in one piece, that had golden bells, and pomegranates made from blue, purple, and scarlet strings hanging from the bottom. On top of the blue outer garment was a vest called the ephod, which was woven with gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and white thread, with a belt of the

same material. On the shoulders of the ephod, were two onyx stones with the names of all 12 tribes of Israel etched into them. On top of the ephod was a breastplate, made of the same material as the ephod, held in place by blue cords and gold rings to the shoulders. All around the border of the breastplate were precious stones, and within the border were 12 very precious stones, set in gold, arranged in 3 rows of 4, with the names of each tribe inscribed on them. [Exodus 28:29](#) "In this way, Aaron will carry the names of the tribes of Israel on the sacred chestpiece over his heart when he goes into the Holy Place. This will be a continual reminder that he represents the people when he comes before the LORD. [Exodus 28:29 NLT](#). Christ our true High Priest, bears on His heart the names of every repentant sinner, when He ministers in the heavenly temple on their behalf. [Psalm 40:17](#) As for me, since I am poor and needy, let the Lord keep me in his thoughts. You are my helper and my savior. O my God, do not delay. [Psalm 40:17 NLT](#).

On top of the white linen turban, the high priest wore a gold plate, that was held in place with blue string, with the words "Holiness to Jehovah," inscribed on it. Everything about the priestly uniform was to help people realize that God is holy, and everyone who comes into His presence should be clean and pure.

The sanctuary, its services, and the priests were all symbolic of real things taking place in heaven [[Hebrews 8:5](#)]. There were services that were repeated daily, which included sacrifices, and the holy place; but there was one service that was performed only once each year which included the most holy place. Only the high priest could enter the most holy place, and he did so only after careful preparation. It was not a casual thing to appear before God, because unforgiven sins could cause him to be destroyed by the glory of God. After carefully performing each step of the yearly service, the high priest would enter the most holy place and stand in front of the mercy seat, where he would make atonement for the Israelites. True atonement, or unity with God, is only possible through the sacrifice of Jesus to pay the price for our forgiven sins; but before that great sacrifice, the animal sacrifices performed took its place, while pointing forward to the actual event.

Every morning and evening a year-old lamb, without any blemish, was sacrificed and burned on the altar. This was to remind Israel that they belonged to Jehovah, and that they were dependent on the blood of the true Lamb of God, Christ. Only a lamb without spot or blemish could be a symbol of the perfect Lamb of God [[1 Peter 1:19](#)]. After the true Lamb of God was sacrificed, and the sacrificial services were ended, Paul said, [Romans 12:1](#) And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice--the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to

worship him. [Romans 12:1 NLT](#). We should offer our lives to God, to serve Him, and to do His will.

In the daily service, the priest would enter the most holy place to burn incense at the altar in front of the veil, looking in the direction of the ark, but not seeing it. The cloud of glory could be seen above the top of the veil, and sometimes overflowed into the holy place, causing the priest to have to back out of the sanctuary. Today as we pray, in faith we look to our great High Priest that we cannot see, who is pleading for our forgiveness with His sacrifice in the sanctuary in heaven.

The sweet-smelling incense that rose from the altar and flowed into the presence of God in the most holy place, represents the perfect righteousness of Christ that is combined with our prayers going up to heaven. The perfect life of Christ offered in place of our sinful life is the only way we can be made acceptable to God. Blood and incense are symbols of Christ through Whom we can be forgiven, and without Whom we cannot enter the presence of God.

In Israel, the morning and evening sacrifice and burning of incense became a time when they would search their hearts, pray, and confess their sins. Not that they couldn't pray at any time, but at those times, their prayers were united and rose with the incense from the altar. In later times, even when there was no temple, many Jews still turned their thoughts toward Jerusalem and their prayers toward God. Christians should follow this example and form a routine of worship and prayer and seeking forgiveness every morning and evening. Routine with the true spirit of worship is pleasing to God.

Showbread, which means "bread of the presence," is a symbol of our dependence on God for spiritual and actual food. The Israelites received actual food in the form of manna, but they were still in need of spiritual food. [John 6:48](#) Yes, I am the bread of life! <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. <sup>50</sup> Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh." [John 6:48-51 NLT](#).

The most personal part of the sanctuary services were the individual sacrifices offered for sins. The sinner brought their animal, to the altar in front of the sanctuary, placed their hands on the head of the substitute, confessed their sins, symbolically transferring them to the innocent animal, then killed it. There were various procedures for what would be done with the blood and the fat and the meat of the animal. If it was a priest who sinned, the animal was a young bull, blood was taken into the sanctuary and sprinkled before the veil, and some was smeared on

the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest was poured out at the base of the altar of sacrifice. [[Leviticus 4:3-12](#)]. For common people, the sacrifice was generally a young female goat or lamb. Blood was smeared on the horns of the altar of sacrifice, and the rest poured at the base of the altar [[Leviticus 4:27-35](#)].

Every day, sacrifices were offered for sins, which were then symbolically transferred to the sanctuary. It was necessary to cleanse the sanctuary of the sins it was "holding," and this was to be done once a year on the great "Day of Atonement." On that day, the priests brought two kid goats to the door of the tabernacle. Lots were cast to designate one for the Lord, and the other would be the scapegoat. The goat for the Lord was killed as a sin offering for the people, and the high priest took the blood into the most holy place and sprinkled some on the mercy seat. After that the priest would lay both of his hands on the head of the remaining goat and confess all the sins of the nation, then the goat would be taken by a strong man into the wilderness and left to die.

The Day of Atonement was not a celebration, but was to be spent in quiet, thoughtful humility before God, with prayer and fasting. The whole ceremony taught the people that sins that were confessed daily were transferred by blood to the sanctuary, but another step was required to remove them from the sanctuary. The things that took place on this special day were symbolic of things that would occur only once in heaven [[Hebrews 8:5](#)]. [Hebrews 9:23](#) That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. [Hebrews 9:23 NLT](#).

The apostle John was privileged to have a vision of the temple in heaven, where he saw 7 lamps, golden censers [portable container for carrying burning hot coals] with incense, a golden altar of incense, and through the veil into the most holy place, he saw the "ark of His testament." [[Revelation 4:5](#); [8:3](#); [11:19](#)]. When Jesus returned to heaven, He began the work of which the daily sacrifices were symbols, but with His own blood instead of the blood of animals. But at a point in time, His work would move to the most holy place, where He would perform the work of which the Day of Atonement was symbolic. This work would continue until the day of judgment, when sins of repentant sinners, by the blood of Christ, could be removed from the heavenly sanctuary, and placed on the head of the scapegoat, Satan, who will suffer the punishment for them.

## *Chapter 31—The Sin of Nadab and Abihu*

This chapter is based on [Leviticus 10:1-11](#).

After the sanctuary was dedicated, the priests, Aaron and his 4 sons, were also set apart and recognized for their sacred roles. There was a 7-day service for the sanctuary dedication, and a 7-day service for dedicating the priests. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day, Aaron and his sons offered sacrifices and then Aaron, the new high priest lifted his hands and blessed the people. God's instructions had been followed carefully, and His glory was revealed, showing His acceptance of the sacrifice. When the people saw the glory of God, they raised a shout of praise to God and bowed down with their faces to the ground.

Sometime later, a terrible incident occurred, which cost the lives of 2 of the priests. At the time of worship, Aaron's two oldest sons took their censers to burn incense before the Lord. But they disobeyed the instructions of God by using regular fire, rather than the fire kindled by God. For this disobedience, fire went out from God and immediately killed them as the people were watching.

Nadab and Abihu, had been honored by being chosen as part of the 70 elders who saw the glory of God on the mountain. But their connection to Moses and Aaron did not mean their sin would be overlooked. If anything, their privilege and knowledge made their sin worse, because they knew better. Being in a position of leadership does not make someone too important to suffer the consequences of their actions. Just because God had honored them by recognizing them for an important role, did not mean they would not be punished for sin.

Nadab and Abihu lacked good habits and self-control, in part because their father was not firm in teaching them right from wrong and didn't discipline them when they were young. Because they didn't respect their father's authority, and nothing happened when they disobeyed him, they failed to take the requirements of God seriously. Obviously not everyone who disobeys God is immediately struck dead, but in this case, being so near the presence and glory of God, the details of His instructions were important, and unfortunately, they became a lesson of this.

Those who disobey God's commands are cursed and may be able to continue doing so away from His presence, but they could not survive an encounter with His glory in this state. Anyone who believes that keeping most of God's commands is good enough, or that they can change some if they wish, are mistaken. [Proverbs 14:12](#) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death. [Proverbs 14:12 NLT](#).

Then Moses said to Aaron, and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, you must not show sorrow, or you will also die because the anointing oil of God is on

you. By getting upset over the death of his sons, it might appear that he felt the judgment was unjust, and this could lead the Israelites to complain against God. Sympathizing with the sinner in a way excuses the sin, but it is the duty of Christ's followers to show them their error. There are some who claim to be loving by turning a blind eye to sin in others, but they are hindering the work of the Holy Spirit on the sinner by doing so. Many will go to ruin because they have been shown sympathy instead of correction.

One of the main things that contributed to the disobedience of Nadab and Abihu was that they were partially drunk from wine. They knew that it was necessary to carefully prepare to present themselves in the presence of God at the sanctuary. But their thinking was dulled by the use of alcohol, and they could see no difference between the sacred and common fire. From that time on it became a rule for the priests that they should not drink wine or anything with alcohol before going into the tabernacle. Things that weaken the mind and body make it harder to distinguish between right and wrong, and those who make decisions that affect others should especially be clear thinking so they can be just and merciful.

[1 Peter 2:9](#) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. [1 Peter 2:9 NLT](#). [1 Corinthians 6:19](#) Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, <sup>20</sup> for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. [1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT](#). [1 Corinthians 10:31](#) So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. [1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT](#). [1 Corinthians 3:17](#) God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. [1 Corinthians 3:17 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 32—The Law and the Covenants*

In the beginning Adam and Eve were aware of God's law, and before sinning, it was natural for them to obey it. When they sinned, the law did not change, but it became more natural for them to disobey the law. So, God put a system in place to help people to be obedient, and He also gave them a promise that He would suffer the death they deserved, so they could be saved from sin. It should be made very clear that if there had not been a fall into sin, there would have been no death, no need of a Savior, and therefore no need of sacrifices.

Adam taught his children the law of God, and they were to teach their own, but most did not accept or obey it. The world became so bad that it had to be destroyed, so God used a flood to wash away the great wickedness and start again with Noah and his family. Like Adam, Noah taught his children about the law of God but evil began spreading again after the flood. Then God called Abraham, who was one of the few who listened to the teachings of Noah and kept God's law. [Genesis 26:5](#) I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." [Genesis 26:5 NLT](#).

To the men of the family of Abraham, God introduced circumcision, as a physical sign, that they were chosen, and would stay faithful to Yahweh, and obey His law. But many, even of those who received the sign, were not faithful to God, which led to their slavery in Egypt. Then God brought them out of Egypt, and gave them a physical copy of His law, the 10 commandments, and spoke it so that the entire nation could hear it with their own ears. Then God even gave even more instructions which were written down by Moses, many of which were designed to help the people of Israel keep the 10 commandments.

The system of sacrificing animals that God gave Adam, which taught that one day a Savior would die to save them from sin, was corrupted by Satan and made a part of idolatry and false religions. So, when God gave the Israelites the 10 commandments, he also gave them the sanctuary, the priesthood, and very detailed instructions regarding sacrifices. These were all written down by Moses and made a part of the nation's culture and religion.

The 10 commandments can be called the moral law, and the sacrificial system and laws supporting it the ceremonial law. Their purposes are different, and they should not be lumped together as one and the same. The sacrificial system pointed forward to the time when Christ would offer His own life as a sacrifice, to save humanity from sin. When that was finished, the sacrificial system would come to an end. But the 10 commandments are the law that Jesus was talking about in His sermon on the mount that would never pass away. [Matthew 5:17](#) "Don't misunderstand

why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. [Matthew 5:17-18 NLT](#). You might say the sacrificial system of laws was fulfilled, and their purpose was accomplished, but the moral law, the 10 commandments will never end. That moral law is as unchangeable as God's character, and His throne, and will remain in effect for all time. [Nehemiah 9:13](#) "You came down at Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and instructions that were just, and decrees and commands that were good. [Nehemiah 9:13 NLT](#). [Romans 7:12](#) But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good. [Romans 7:12 NLT](#).

Those who claim that Jesus came to do away with the entire Old Testament, speak of the Jewish religion as a time of darkness, rituals, and ceremonies. But they are mistaken, because there was not a time that we know of when God revealed Himself with more power and glory, than when He gave His law to Israel. In fact, contrary to what many believe, the God of the Old Testament, the One Who cleansed the earth with the flood, the One Who punished Egypt with plagues, the One Who appeared with great power and glory on Mount Sinai, the One Who fought for Israel, and the One Who punished her, and the meek and lowly Jesus, were all the same Being, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was the one who spoke to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, some of whom even saw Him and talked to Him in human flesh before He came as Jesus. It was also the Son of God that spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament.

[[1 Corinthians 8:6](#) But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we live for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life. [1 Corinthians 8:6 NLT](#). [Acts 7:38](#) Moses was with our ancestors, the assembly of God's people in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us. [Acts 7:38 NLT](#). [Isaiah 63:9](#) In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years. [Isaiah 63:9 NLT](#).]

This is what Jesus said of the Old Testament, which were the Scriptures at the time. [John 5:39](#) "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! [John 5:39 NLT](#). [Luke 16:29](#) "... 'Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote.' ... <sup>31</sup> "But Abraham said, 'If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead.'" [Luke 16:29, 31 NLT](#).

The ceremonial law in the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ in the New Testament. The incense going up from the altar of incense is His righteousness that is necessary to make our prayers acceptable. The bleeding victim on the altar of sacrifice represented the bleeding Son of God on the cross. Finally, Jesus came in human form, and became a Light to the world, and ever since the Light has been streaming from the cross of Calvary, and from the sanctuary in heaven. The good news of salvation through the death of Jesus, makes the ceremonial law much clearer.

Some think the blessings of God were only for the Israelites, but He did not want them to treat Him as exclusively theirs. When Abraham was called, he was a light and an example to neighboring kings and nations. He was treated with respect and was known as a man of integrity, fairness, and bravery. The blessings of God flowed through Joseph, to the Egyptians, and overflowed to the rest of the surrounding countries that were affected by the famine. Moses was a light to the Egyptians before his exile to the wilderness, and then the knowledge of the power of God was spread far and wide through the plagues and the deliverance of Israel from slavery. Rahab in Jericho said, [Joshua 2:11](#) No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. [Joshua 2:11 NLT](#). Hundreds of years later the Philistines reminded their people of the plagues on Egypt. [1 Samuel 4:8](#) Help! Who can save us from these mighty gods of Israel? They are the same gods who destroyed the Egyptians with plagues when Israel was in the wilderness. [1 Samuel 4:8 NLT](#).

God wanted Israel to remain pure and keep His law so that surrounding nations could see the great benefits that resulted from this lifestyle. In the same way God wants His followers today to be a light to the world. [Matthew 5:14](#) "You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. [Matthew 5:14-16 NLT](#).

It was their own selfishness that led the Israelites to hoard the light and blessings of God and refuse to share them, even as they looked down on everyone else around them. But the covenant God had with Abraham said, [Genesis 22:18](#) And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed--all because you have obeyed me." [Genesis 22:18 NLT](#). God wanted Abraham to remain pure and to keep His law. [Genesis 17:1](#) When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai--'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. [Genesis 17:1 NLT](#). And this is what was said of him at the time,

[Genesis 26:5](#) ... Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." [Genesis 26:5 NLT](#).

The covenant that was first made with Adam, and renewed with Abraham, was fulfilled, signed, or made effective, by the death of Christ on the cross. There was another covenant that was made with Israel at Mount Sinai, that was continually fulfilled, signed, or made effective by the blood of animal sacrifices. The blood of animal sacrifices came first, so it could be called the first or old covenant, but the covenant that was signed second, was made first.

So why were two covenants needed? Israel had lost much of their knowledge of God and the covenant He had made with Abraham, when they were in slavery in Egypt. When He brought them out of Egypt, He showed them His power and wanted them to learn to love and trust Him. They had mostly lost all concept of the holiness of God and His law and their need for a Savior. So, He made a more tangible covenant with them, and if they would keep their side of it, He would bless them. [Exodus 19:5](#) Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. <sup>6</sup> And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel." [Exodus 19:5-6 NLT](#).

The Israelites didn't realize that without Christ, they could not keep God's law, and they immediately agreed to their covenant with God. [Exodus 24:7](#) Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people. Again they all responded, "We will do everything the LORD has commanded. We will obey." [Exodus 24:7 NLT](#). But only a few weeks later, they broke their promise, when they worshipped the golden calf. Now they began to realize their helplessness, and their need for a Savior, so it helped them to appreciate God's covenant with Abraham.

The old covenant was obey and live, disobey and be cursed [[Leviticus 18:5](#); [Deuteronomy 27:26](#)]. The new covenant was better because, not only did it include the promise of forgiveness for sins, but it also included help from God to change the person and bring them into closer harmony with the law. [Jeremiah 31:33](#) "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the LORD. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> ... "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." [Jeremiah 31:33-34 NLT](#).

Instead of trying to be righteous, we should accept the righteousness of Christ and His blood to cover our sins, and His perfect life in place of ours. Then the Holy Spirit can give us the "fruit of the Spirit," and with the grace and power of Christ, we can live in obedience to the law of God that is written on our hearts. [Psalm 40:8](#) I

take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart." [Psalm 40:8 NLT](#). [John 8:29](#) And the one who sent me is with me--he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him." [John 8:29 NLT](#).

The relationship between faith and the law under the new covenant is described by Paul. [Romans 5:1](#) Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. [Romans 5:1 NLT](#). [Romans 3:31](#) Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law. [Romans 3:31 NLT](#). [Romans 8:3](#) The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. <sup>4</sup> He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. [Romans 8:3-4 NLT](#).

God's plan to save humanity has become clearer over time. God first gave the promise of salvation to the patriarchs, then he gave the sanctuary services to the Israelites, then He gave the actual life and sacrifice of Christ on the cross. But the principles of His law have not changed. [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. <sup>5</sup> And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. [Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NLT](#). [Leviticus 19:18](#) ... love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. [Leviticus 19:18 NLT](#). Then when Jesus came to earth, [Matthew 22:37](#) Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [Matthew 22:37-39 NLT](#). The words were the same, and the Teacher was the same, and He elaborated the same law in the sermon on the mount [[Matthew 5-7](#)]. [James 1:17](#) Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. [James 1:17 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 33—From Sinai to Kadesh*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 11-12](#).

The dedication of the tabernacle and the priests occurred near the start of the second year after the Exodus. The Passover was celebrated and there was a census to number the people. With the instructions given by God to Moses on the mountain, the government of the nation was established. God was the King and the ultimate authority, and Moses was the human leader chosen by God. 70 elders had also been chosen and recognized by God, and they helped Moses in the administration of the nation. There were also priests who were in charge of the sanctuary and could get answers from God there. There was a leader for each tribe, and under them captains over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens [[Deuteronomy 1:15](#)]. Finally, the camp was laid out in an orderly fashion with the tabernacle in the center, with the tribe of Levi surrounding it, and the remaining tribes in groups surrounding it.

The Levites were the only ones allowed to take down and set up the tabernacle, and the penalty was death for anyone else who came near. The tents of Moses and Aaron were in front of the opening of the sanctuary courtyard on the east side. The Levites were divided by their ancestry from the three sons of Levi. The descendants of Kohath were in charge of the ark and the other furniture and camped on the south side. The descendants of Merari were in charge of the hardware and camped on the north side. The descendants of Gershon were in charge of the curtains and hangings and camped on the west side.

The rest of the Israelites were organized by tribe and had a designated place to camp, and order to march in. The non-Israelites that came with them out of Egypt, had to camp on the outer edges of the camp and were to be treated nicely, but could not become citizens until the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation.

There were strict laws for cleanliness and waste, and anyone considered unclean could not enter the camp. This was very important with so many people living so close to each other. So, cleanliness was taught as necessary to have God's presence in the camp. [Deuteronomy 23:14](#) The camp must be holy, for the LORD your God moves around in your camp to protect you and to defeat your enemies. He must not see any shameful thing among you, or he will turn away from you. [Deuteronomy 23:14 NLT](#).

Heaven is a place of order because that is God's nature. Success can only occur if there is harmony and order. So, in addition to the camp being organized, the movement was also specified by God. The ark of the covenant carried by the children of Kohath would lead the way, with Moses, Aaron, and the priests.

Trumpets were used to communicate specific directions. With so many people, it was necessary for everyone to follow directions, and those who did not were punished with death. It was God who decided when the Israelites would move, which direction they would go, and where and when they would set up camp.

The trip from Sinai to Kadesh, which was on the border of Canaan, was only 11 days. They were anxious to enter the promised land, but they had been at Sinai so long, they had settled into a comfortable routine. It was almost difficult to leave a place that had been so blessed with such visible evidence of the presence of God. The last leg of their journey was difficult and slow, having to pass through dry desert with great pits and narrow passes with steep rocky walls.

After just 3 days, starting with the mixed multitude, the complaining began. They questioned the route taken and started to blame Moses for taking them the hard way. They also began complaining about only having manna, and no meat to eat. God could easily have provided meat as a daily part of the food He miraculously gave them, but it was His purpose to change their diet from what they were used to in Egypt. He wanted them to enjoy a healthier diet, closer to what He had given to Adam and Eve in the garden, a diet free of meat. This was an opportunity for Satan to stir up trouble. He knew that when people lose control over their appetite, and eat too much, or eat forbidden foods, it was much easier for him to lead them into sin. The first sin and some of Satan's greatest victories over humanity have been possible through the abuse of appetite. Eating and drinking desirable foods and drinks that are bad for the human body, can lead to a lower resistance against sin, and less desire to follow God's ways.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He wanted the best for them. He wanted to establish them in Canaan as a pure, holy and happy people. The order, discipline, and diet were all for their good. If they had been willing to follow God's plan in this way, as a nation, weakness and disease would have been almost unheard of among them. They would also have had greater physical strength, and intelligence and wisdom. [Psalm 78:18](#) They stubbornly tested God in their hearts, demanding the foods they craved. <sup>19</sup> They even spoke against God himself, saying, "God can't give us food in the wilderness. <sup>20</sup> Yes, he can strike a rock so water gushes out, but he can't give his people bread and meat." [Psalm 78:18-20 NLT](#).

There had been complaining before they had reached Sinai, but they had since seen the power and holiness of Jehovah and had accepted Him as their king. Their complaining now was rebellion and if it was not punished, the entire nation could be ruined with disorder. So, lightning came out of the cloud and killed the guiltiest complainers. Moses prayed for them and the lightning stopped, but the complaining didn't, and they added to it their complaints about the manna. [Numbers](#)

[11:4](#) Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. And the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. <sup>5</sup> "We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted. <sup>6</sup> But now our appetites are gone. All we ever see is this manna!" [Numbers 11:4-6 NLT](#).

Somehow the people must have been going around the 70 elders that were supposed to relieve the load on Moses and brought their complaints directly to him. Moses went to God and asked why this burden of leading the people had been given to him, and asked, how can I provide meat for all these people. So, God told Moses to choose and bring 70 elders to the tabernacle, men who were old so they would have a lot of life experience, but still highly respected, and also known for making good decisions. God took some of Moses' spirit and put it on the 70, who were then to share the burden of leadership with him. This need for people to help him would not have been necessary if Moses had completely depended on God for strength and not taken so much responsibility upon himself. This showed a lack of faith on the part of Moses, and sadly, giving these men this power would have evil consequences later.

God told Moses to tell the people that He would provide meat for them the next day. [Numbers 11:18](#) "And say to the people, 'Purify yourselves, for tomorrow you will have meat to eat. You were whining, and the LORD heard you when you cried, "Oh, for some meat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will have to eat it. <sup>19</sup> And it won't be for just a day or two, or for five or ten or even twenty. <sup>20</sup> You will eat it for a whole month until you gag and are sick of it. For you have rejected the LORD, who is here among you, and you have whined to him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"'" [Numbers 11:18-20 NLT](#).

Moses again showed a lack of faith and asked God how He would provide meat for so many people for so long? God reproved him and asked, do you think I can't do it? Just watch and see, so Moses told the people what God said, and he also told them that the 70 were now given power to judge the people. To the 70 he said, [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) "... 'You must hear the cases of your fellow Israelites and the foreigners living among you. Be perfectly fair in your decisions <sup>17</sup> and impartial in your judgments. Hear the cases of those who are poor as well as those who are rich. Don't be afraid of anyone's anger, for the decision you make is God's decision. Bring me any cases that are too difficult for you, and I will handle them.' [Deuteronomy 1:16-17 NLT](#).

The bible briefly mentions an incident involving 2 of the 70 who were chosen, named Eldad and Medad. They considered themselves unworthy of such an honor

and they didn't come for their dedication. But when the Spirit of God came upon the 68 who were present, it also fell upon them where they were in the camp. When someone told Moses, Joshua said to stop them, but Moses said, don't, I wish that everyone had the Spirit of God and were prophets [[Numbers 11:29](#)].

The next day, a strong wind blowing in from the sea brought quail, that were flying about waist high, as much as a day's walk in all directions of the camp. Afraid that others would take it all, the people worked day and night, hoarding as much as they could gather. The ones who took the least gathered 50 bushels. What they couldn't eat immediately was dried for preservation. This was not God's ideal plan for them, but He gave them what they begged for. Many who were craving the meat ate too much and got sick and even died, and the most rebellious were struck with a plague immediately. [Numbers 11:33](#) But while they were gorging themselves on the meat--while it was still in their mouths--the anger of the LORD blazed against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. [Numbers 11:33 NLT](#).

At the next camp, Moses would sadly suffer an attack from those much closer to him. His siblings Aaron and Miriam were both great leaders in Israel, and both had the spiritual gift of being prophets. When Moses had followed God's instruction to choose the 70 elders, he had not checked with Aaron and Miriam to see what they thought. This made them jealous, but their jealousy had been building for some time. When Moses had been reunited with his family and father-in-law, his wife Zipporah, had probably told her father about how she thought Moses was overworked and stressed with his responsibilities. When he had taken the advice of his father-in-law and shared the responsibility of leadership with the 70, Aaron and Miriam felt it was unnecessary to share the power and authority that could have been handled by themselves. Miriam had looked down on Zipporah because she was not an Israelite, and probably also because of the color of her skin [[Numbers 12:1](#)]. Now, whether this was the same 70 or a new group, Moses was sharing power again without consulting them.

Miriam said to Aaron, does the Lord only speak through Moses? Doesn't He speak through us as well? Moses was not at all interested in the power of his position, [Numbers 12:3](#) (Now Moses was very humble--more humble than any other person on earth.) [Numbers 12:3 NLT](#). But God heard their complaints and spoke to them, telling them to meet with Moses at the tabernacle. When the 3 were there God spoke to them, "Listen carefully to what I am going to tell you. I speak to prophets in dreams and visions. But with Moses, I speak to him face to face and plainly, not in words that are hard to understand. How dare you criticize My servant Moses?" [[Numbers 12:6-8](#)]. By being disloyal to Moses, they were rebelling against God. When He finished speaking to them and the cloud lifted, Miriam had been punished with leprosy, white as snow. Aaron confessed their complaining, then he

begged Moses to not let Miriam die a leper. Moses prayed to God and Miriam was healed, but she had to be banished from the camp for 7 days before she could be considered clean from the leprosy.

This incident was a warning to all people who might think to challenge the authority of Moses. There had been a lot of complaints and questioning of Moses' decisions, and if that did not stop, things would have gotten out of control. Miriam was guilty of being jealous of Moses and not wanting to share power. Envy and jealousy are satanic traits that have terrible consequences. [Proverbs 27:4](#) Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous. [Proverbs 27:4 NLT](#). [James 3:16](#) For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. [James 3:16 NLT](#).

We should not lightly say bad things or judge the motives or actions of others. [James 4:11](#) Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. [James 4:11 NLT](#). <sup>1</sup> [Corinthians 4:5](#) So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time--before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due. [1 Corinthians 4:5 NLT](#). Whoever takes it upon themselves to judge others is doing God's job.

The Bible specifically mentions those called to positions of leadership by God. <sup>1</sup> [Timothy 5:19](#) Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses. [1 Timothy 5:19 NLT](#). God will hold those whom He has called accountable for their actions. That is not to say that if someone is doing something evil, it should not be stopped, but there should be enough evidence before action is taken. Otherwise, we should honor those whom God has called and honors, and we should especially never be motivated to complain about them out of jealousy.

## *Chapter 34—The Twelve Spies*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 13-14](#).

Just 11 days after leaving Sinai, the Israelites had arrived in Kadesh which was not far from the borders of the Promised Land. Someone came up with the idea of sending spies, to look over the country and bring back a report of what they saw. Moses ran this plan by God and He allowed it, adding that 1 person from each tribe should be chosen for this mission. They were told to bring back a report about the number and strength of the people, but also about the food that grew in the land.

The spies went from south to north and checked out the whole land, for 40 days. Everyone was anxiously waiting when the spies returned, and the people gathered to welcome them back, and to hear their report of the country. The spies had brought back some of the fruit of the land, including a cluster of grapes that was so large it was carried by two people. They also brought figs and pomegranates of which there were plenty. The spies reported that the land is very good, flowing with milk and honey as reported. The people listening were starting to get really excited, when the spies broke the bad news. They said the cities had great walls, people were very strong, and some of them are even giants. They added, there is no way we can conquer those cities, or defeat those people. Now the emotions of the people suddenly turned from excitement to discouragement and gloom.

Completely forgetting the great power of God, and how He had delivered them from Pharaoh's army, they began to complain and blamed Moses and Aaron for lying and giving them false hopes.

But amid the confusion of complaints and many people talking at the same time, Caleb spoke out. He agreed that the people are strong and the walls high, but he added, God promised this land to us, and we can definitely take it. But the 10 spies who were afraid and lacked faith in God's promise shouted back, we cannot defeat those people, they are stronger than us, and we were like grasshoppers compared to those giants. Joshua, who was also one of the 12, joined with Caleb in trying to get the people to believe that with God's help they could succeed. The 10 shouted back, lying this time, and said, the land will eat us up. They were now under the control of Satan, and they continued to discourage the people, and whipped them up into a revolt against Moses, Caleb and Joshua. The people now cursed Moses and Aaron, and cried, God should have left us in Egypt, and some said, it would have been better to die in the wilderness. They even went as far as to choose a new leader that could take them back to Egypt.

Moses and Aaron bowed down in prayer, and Joshua and Caleb rushed in among the crowd and tried to calm the people down. They repeated their report that the

land is very good, even flowing with milk and honey, and that God was well able to give them possession of the land if they only believed. But the people would not hear it, they had given themselves over to Satan and were now under his control. They even began to pick up stones to try to kill the 2 faithful spies, when suddenly they became quiet and dropped the stones, because the glory of God lit up the tabernacle.

Moses went into the tabernacle and God said, "I will strike these people with a deadly infectious disease, and I will no longer claim them as My own, but I will make your descendants into a great nation." But for the sake of God's reputation and also knowing how loving and merciful He is, Moses pleaded that Israel would not be rejected and destroyed. In response, God promised that Israel would be spared, but He would not drive out the Canaanites from the land for them, and they would be punished harshly. Though probably not meaning it literally, in their rebellion, the people had said, "we should have died in the wilderness." Now God made this their punishment. Everyone 20 years old and older, except for Joshua and Caleb, would die in the wilderness and would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. And for each of the 40 days the spies were scouting out the land, the Israelites would spend a year in the wilderness.

Moses told the people the punishment for their rebellion, and the 10 spies who started the rebellion were among those killed by the plague. Now that the people heard the consequences of their rebellion, they regretted it, but they did not truly repent. As further evidence that they had not repented and submitted to the will of God, the next day the rebels decided that they didn't want to return to the wilderness and planned an attack on the Canaanites. When Moses heard what was happening, he quickly went to them and asked why they were disobeying the command of God. He told them they would not succeed, and they would be defeated by the Canaanites, because God would not be with them. But they went anyway and were badly defeated, with many losing their lives. This failure by Israel, and the confidence it inspired in the Canaanites made it more difficult later when they came back. In the end, the rebellious people realized they could not succeed without God, and as much as they hated it, their punishment was fair.

God has dealt with human rebellion in similar ways throughout the history of the world. When those who claim to be His followers, join with evil angels in rebelling against God, He will often direct events so that in the end, those people will be forced to admit God was fair, even if they don't repent. If this doesn't happen in this present life, in the judgment, all sinners will admit that God is fair.

## *Chapter 35—The Rebellion of Korah*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 16-17](#).

The punishment at Kadesh, including the plague and the defeat at the hands of the Canaanites, served to quiet any open complaining or rebellion for a short time. But that didn't mean everyone was content. Korah was a Levite from the Kohath family, which was responsible for the sanctuary furniture, including the ark of the covenant. He was a cousin of Moses and Aaron, and he coveted the priesthood that had been given exclusively to Aaron and his family. Korah's tent, on the south side of the sanctuary, happened to be near some of the leaders of the tribe of Reuben. Dathan and Abiram were descendants of the oldest son of Jacob and reasoned that they had more right to lead the nation than Moses did. Between these 3, a plan began to form to take the civil and religious authority of the nation, from Moses and Aaron.

With nothing to look forward to but wandering and finally death in wilderness, it was not difficult for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to find sympathizers for their cause. What the 3 men and their followers failed to understand was that it was God, and not Moses and Aaron who were leading the Israelites. Moses was only following the directions given to him from God. The life of Moses was much more peaceful and stress free as a shepherd, but since it was God that had called him to this position, he dared not disobey.

The punishment of Miriam had recently occurred for challenging the authority of Moses, and at that time God Himself had even declared that Moses was greater than any prophet. Yet these 3 who had been privileged to be selected among the 70 who helped Moses and Aaron in leading the nation, wanted more. This desire for power had started small and developed slowly, not unlike the rebellion of Satan in heaven. It started by quietly discussing their unhappiness about the current leadership, with those who were also dissatisfied. As they slowly gained support, they even began to speak to other leaders in Israel. As more and more people agreed with them, their support grew so large that they even began to believe they were working for the honor of God.

The 3 were so successful that they had 250 princes and leaders in Israel on their side. With this much support, they felt sure they could make some big changes that would be great improvements over the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Who had given Moses the right to be a dictator over them. Who had voted for Aaron and his children to be the only priests out of the entire nation. After all weren't the firstborn of each family supposed to have a priestly role?

With the influential support behind them, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram began sympathizing with the common people, telling them they were not wrong. Since they were in the right, it wasn't their complaints that had brought on the anger of God. Korah started bringing up the past, blaming Moses for the difficulties they had experienced. In fact, he claimed that the complaints and even the punishment of the people were Moses' fault because of his bad decisions. Korah claimed that if he was their leader, they wouldn't be wandering aimlessly through the wilderness, but they would take the most direct route to the Promised Land. Finally, he even claimed that the motivation for the actions of Moses was to cause them all to die in the wilderness so he could take all their possessions.

Korah finally had so much support that he was finally ready to confront Moses and Aaron directly. He said that the entire nation had been chosen by God, so they were all holy, so what gave Moses and Aaron the right to be rulers over them? Moses was surprised at how widespread the rebellion was and bowed down with his face to the ground to talk to God. Moses then told everyone that God would give them a day to think about what they were doing, and that tomorrow, He would give a demonstration of who was holy, and who He had chosen as His representative to lead the people. Those who thought they had a right to be priests should bring a censor to burn incense at the tabernacle.

Speaking directly to Korah and the Levites who were on his side, Moses said, God has already given you the privilege to be near Him, and to see and touch things that the rest of the people can't. Now, you want Aaron's position. Dathan and Abiram were not as bold as Korah, but when Moses asked them to come and give their complaints, they ignored him, and gave their response to the people. Do you think nothing of the fact that you took us away from a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness. You haven't brought us into the land flowing with milk and honey as you promised, and now will you punish us by taking our eyes? They dared to use God's words, the Promised Land, to refer to their slavery in Egypt, and they accused Moses expecting everyone to blindly follow him. Moses didn't get angry at them or try to justify his actions, he simply spoke to God, in the hearing of the people, and asked God to decide.

The next day Korah and the 250 princes came as directed, with their censors, to the courtyard of the tabernacle. Many of their followers also came to see their victory over Moses. Then in the presence of all the people, the glory of God appeared, and He told Moses and Aaron to keep their distance from the rebels, so they wouldn't be destroyed together with them. But Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, and prayed, "Oh God, God of all heaven and earth, will you kill all the people for the sin of one man?" Korah now went to where Dathan and Abiram were because they had refused to come to Moses or appear before the Lord. Moses and the faithful

elders were followed by the people to where Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were. Then Moses said to everyone there, "Separate yourselves from these wicked men, do not even touch anything that belongs to them, so you are not caught up in their sin." On hearing that warning, most of the people that had been siding with them abandoned them, and the 3 men and their families stood together. Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that God has chosen me to do what I have done, and I have not taken it upon myself. If these men go on living, and die a normal death, then God did not send me. But if the earth opens and swallows them and everything they own, then you will know that these men have rebelled against God."

Everyone was watching and they didn't have to wait long, because as soon as Moses stopped speaking, the earth opened up under them, and swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, together with their families, their tents and everything they owned. The people fled in fear, but the punishment from God was not finished yet. Even though the 250 princes had survived the first judgment, they were not repentant and willing to accept Moses as God's appointed leader, so fire came out of the cloud and destroyed them. At this point, God had only destroyed those in positions of leadership, people who should have known better, but there were many common people who had not repented of their rebellion. Repentance would have meant that they accepted the fact that they had sinned at the border of the Promised Land and God's command that they would die in the wilderness was fair.

The rebellious people went back to their tents that night, angry and plotting what they would do the next day. They convinced themselves that Moses and Aaron had used some kind of magic to kill their leaders, so they decided to kill them.

A dangerous mob approached Moses and Aaron the next day and accused them of killing God's people. As they were about to attack, the glory appeared again in the cloud above the tabernacle, and a voice spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, back away from these people so I can consume them instantly. But Moses didn't run away, even as a shepherd does not run away when his flock is in danger. Instead, he pleaded with God not to destroy everyone, but a plague had already started, and the guilty began to die. Moses told Aaron to quickly take a censer and run among the people. The incense rose with the prayers of Moses and the plague was stopped, but not before 14,000 rebellious Israelites died.

Now, to take away any question about which tribe and family God had chosen to be priests in Israel, God instructed each tribe to bring a rod with their name inscribed on it. 12 rods were placed in the tabernacle and the next day, when they were brought out, Aaron's rod had blossomed and even grown some almonds. This rod would forever be evidence that Aaron had not taken the priesthood himself but

had been chosen by God for this role. The people now confessed that they had sinned and that the rebel leaders had received a fair punishment from God.

The rebellion of Korah was not unlike that of Satan in heaven. His pride led him to think he could improve on God's government. Since his fall from heaven, he has used the same pattern to cause disorder on earth. He uses envy, discontent, and the desire for power to motivate people to rebel against authority. Many who even claim to be followers of Christ, are looking for ways to gain power, and exalt themselves. They find ways to get the sympathy and support of people by making false accusations against true servants of God. By continually repeating lies, they eventually began to believe what they are saying is true, and as a result even wrongly believe they are doing God's will.

When people sin, they give Satan access to their minds, and as a result he can take them from one level of wickedness to a greater one. Rejecting truth makes it easier to sin, and that begins a cycle that can eventually end with sin no longer even seeming wrong. Then they hate those who reprove them and claim the reprover is the one stirring up trouble. This is how Satan can cause trouble in the church and weaken the ones who are building it up. He did this in the time of the reformers, and he is doing it in churches today.

Korah had plenty of evidence that it was God and not Moses that led Israel. But he had rejected light until he became blind to seeing the greatest miracles as evidence of this. When the people accused Moses and Aaron of killing the Lord's people when the earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families, they were doing the same thing. They were really saying that it was Satan that was behind the power that killed those men. They had hardened their heart against the Spirit of God, which is called sin against the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 12:32](#) Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come. [Matthew 12:32 NLT](#). It is not that sin cannot be forgiven, but that when people cannot hear the Holy Spirit anymore, they do not see their sin, so they do not repent.

## *Chapter 36—In the Wilderness*

After 38 years in the wilderness all the people who were 20 and above at the time of the rebellion at Kadesh, had died. [Deuteronomy 2:14](#) "Thirty-eight years passed from the time we first left Kadesh-barnea until we finally crossed the Zered Brook! By then, all the men old enough to fight in battle had died in the wilderness, as the LORD had vowed would happen. <sup>15</sup> The LORD struck them down until they had all been eliminated from the community. [Deuteronomy 2:14-15 NLT](#). During this time of wilderness wandering, as a sign that the older generation had been rejected by God, they were not to perform circumcision on their sons, and they could not keep the Passover celebration. But during the entire time, the pillar of cloud and fire remained with them, and the sanctuary services continued. Their basic needs of food and water were supplied, and their clothes and shoes didn't wear out [[Deuteronomy 8:4](#), [Nehemiah 9:19-21](#)].

The wandering in the wilderness was a punishment for the rebellion of the older generation, but it also provided discipline to prepare the younger generation to enter the Promised Land. [Deuteronomy 8:5](#) Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good. [Deuteronomy 8:5 NLT](#). [Deuteronomy 8:2](#) Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. <sup>3</sup> Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. [Deuteronomy 8:2-3 NLT](#).

The only things written in the Bible about those 38 years were a few instances of rebellion. In one case the son of an Egyptian man and an Israelite woman, setup his tent in the camp, rather than on the outskirts. The judge ruled that the man was breaking the law that said that Egyptians could not be considered Israelites until the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. The man didn't like the decision and cursed the judge and blasphemed God. The 10 commandments didn't address disrespecting a judge, so the case was brought to Moses, who took it to God. The decision from God was that the blasphemer should be stoned to death. The witnesses had to place their hands on the head of the guilty, and testify what they saw and heard, and then they also had to throw the first stones.

The legal precedent was set, and it became law. [Leviticus 24:15](#) Say to the people of Israel: Those who curse their God will be punished for their sin. <sup>16</sup> Anyone who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be stoned to death by the whole

community of Israel. Any native-born Israelite or foreigner among you who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be put to death. [Leviticus 24:15-16 NLT](#).

Some question the severity of this punishment for only speaking words, but this showed the seriousness of using God's name with reverence. If this sin had not been severely punished, it would have resulted in more rebellion and more death.

In another case, a man who was angry that he could not enter the Promised Land, rebelled against the Sabbath commandment by gathering firewood on that day. This was not a law for all time and all circumstances, but it was clearly stated when they were in the wilderness, where fires were not necessary for warmth. This was not a sin of ignorance, but of defiance. It was already known that breaking the Sabbath was to be punished with death, but how the sentence was to be carried out had not been specified. The case was brought by Moses to God, and the sentence was stoning outside the camp [[Numbers 15:35](#)]. Blasphemy and purposely breaking the Sabbath, both showed the same spirit of defiance against God's law.

There are some today who say that people are not killed for breaking the Sabbath today, so it must just be a law for Jews. Does that mean that since the same death penalty is not executed for the other commandments as it was in ancient Israel, that all the commandments are only Jewish laws? Just because God doesn't require the death sentence for breaking His law now, does not mean that the sentence will not be carried out eventually.

Every single week during the wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were reminded of the Sabbath because of the manna. But though they avoided openly breaking the Sabbath so they would not be killed, in private or in their heart many did not keep it holy [[Ezekiel 20:16](#)]. It was because of this that they ended up scattered among the heathens after they moved into the Promised Land.

The wandering in the wilderness had ended when they returned to Kadesh, where the previous generation had been turned back. It was here that Miriam died and was buried. The history of Israel is one of turning away from God, and when they were in trouble, turning back to Him. And even though they were not perfect, when they made an effort to turn back to Him, he rescued them from their trouble. [Psalm 78:37](#) Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant. <sup>38</sup> Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and did not destroy them all. Many times he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury! <sup>39</sup> For he remembered that they were merely mortal, gone like a breath of wind that never returns. [Psalm 78:37-39 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 37—The Smitten Rock*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 20:1-13](#)

Many years before, in Horeb, God told Moses to hit the rock, before He caused water to flow out of it. During the 40 years in the wilderness, God miraculously provided water for the Israelites when needed, but the water did not necessarily continue to flow when they moved on. The rock that provided a stream of life-giving water represented Christ [[1 Corinthians 10:4](#)]. The rock that was hit was a symbol of Christ, [Isaiah 53:4](#) Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. [Isaiah 53:4-5 NLT](#). Christ was sacrificed once, for the sins of many [[Hebrews 9:28](#)], and only one time was necessary for all who need grace and forgiveness for sins.

Moses referred to God as the Rock of salvation [[Deuteronomy 32:15](#)]. In Psalms it is written: [Psalm 62:7](#) My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. [Psalm 62:7 NLT](#). [Psalm 61:2](#) From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, [Psalm 61:2 NLT](#). [Psalm 94:22](#) But the LORD is my fortress; my God is the mighty rock where I hide. [Psalm 94:22 NLT](#).

Water from the rock was a memorable event in Israel's history and it was celebrated each year during the Feast of Tabernacles. In a ceremony, the people drank from a stream, and the priest took some of the water and poured it out on the altar of burnt offering, while the people sang songs of praise to God.

[John 7:37](#) On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! <sup>38</sup> Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" <sup>39</sup> (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) [John 7:37-39 NLT](#).

If you can imagine what a continuous stream of clean pure water can do in a dry barren land, in the same way, living water that Christ gives will spring up into good works. And these good deeds will refresh all who come in contact with those who drink the living water. [Isaiah 44:3](#) For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children. [Isaiah 44:3 NLT](#). [Isaiah 35:6](#) ... Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the wasteland.

[Isaiah 35:6 NLT](#). [Isaiah 55:1](#) "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink ... [Isaiah 55:1 NLT](#). When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, He said: [John 4:14](#) But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." [John 4:14 NLT](#).

The Israelites were now just a few days from the border of Canaan again, and there was no water, but rather than just providing it for them, God tested them to see what they would do. God told them to pass through the land of Edom which belonged to the descendants of Esau. They were to buy food and water from the Edomites and not expect it for free [[Deuteronomy 2:6](#)]. But there was no water where they were at the time, and rather than nicely asking God for help, they began to complain to Moses and Aaron, [Numbers 20:3](#) The people blamed Moses and said, "If only we had died in the LORD's presence with our brothers! <sup>4</sup> Why have you brought the congregation of the LORD's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? <sup>5</sup> Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates, and no water to drink!" [Numbers 20:3-5 NLT](#).

As usual, Moses went to God to ask what to do. The glory of God appeared and told Moses to take Aaron and the rod and gather the people, then he should speak to the rock, and water would come out of it. The 2 brothers began by doing as God commanded and assembled the people before the rock. But at this point, when he saw the people, his patience ran out. [Numbers 20:10](#) Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?" <sup>11</sup> Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So the entire community and their livestock drank their fill. [Numbers 20:10-11 NLT](#).

God made water rush out of the rock, but Moses had disobeyed God, and in the process had given reason to question whether his past actions were truly following God's commands. The words of Moses also implied that he and Aaron could bring water out of the rock. The rock was a symbol of Christ, and He was to be sacrificed only one time, and from then on, we only need to ask, to receive forgiveness for our sins. Moses had destroyed this symbolism by hitting the rock multiple times.

The disobedience of their leaders overshadowed their sin, and Moses and Aaron were very quickly reproved by God, rather than the people. [Numbers 20:12](#) But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!" [Numbers 20:12 NLT](#). Moses and Aaron humbly repented for their disobedience, but because of their high position of leadership, and the fact that they spoke for God, the punishment could not simply be done away with.

Moses let the people know that he had disobeyed God and would be punished for it. [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) "But the LORD was angry with me because of you, and he would not listen to me. 'That's enough!' he declared. 'Speak of it no more. [Deuteronomy 3:26 NLT](#). The great consequences for that seemingly small error showed that God would not treat Moses and Aaron differently than the common people for sinning. In fact, if anything the punishment was more severe, because of their high position.

Those who claim to represent God have a great responsibility, to not lose their patience and bring dishonor on His name. Moses was honored by God like few men ever were, and as a result, the responsibility he carried was greater than most. The temptation that led to his sin was very great, but sin is never excusable because of how strong the temptation is. God has provided a way for any who ask, to supply His strength and power to withstand temptation. Satan knows our weakness, and attacks us accordingly, but God has offered help so that we do not need to be overcome by his temptations.

## ***Chapter 38—The Journey Around Edom***

This chapter is based on [Numbers 20:14-29](#); [21:1-9](#).

Obedying God's command to pass through Edom, the Israelites sent a message to the Edomite king. "This is what your brother Israel says, you know all the hardship that happened to us in Egypt, and how the Lord brought us up out of Egypt. We are now in Kadesh, on your border, and ask permission to pass through your country. We will stay on the highway, and we will pay for everything we need including water.

This polite request was met with a rude response: "You will not pass through our country, and if you try, you will be met with swords." Going through Edom was God's command, and not sure that the Edomites had clearly understood the request, they sent it again and got the same response.

If the Israelites had not complained about the water and simply trusted God, He would have just led them through Edom and the Edomites would have been too afraid to try to stop them. Now they would suffer for their lack of faith, and for their complaining, and would have to go around the kingdom of Edom.

If God gives a command, evil angels are there to hinder following that command, but angels of God, who are stronger are ready and waiting to help if necessary. It is Satan's plan to cause people to question and delay obeying God's commands. He often does this by causing them to complain, or argue among themselves, which keeps them from receiving the blessings God wants to pour out on them.

The reason God gave the Israelites the command to buy food and water from the Edomites and not take advantage of them was because the Edomites would have been afraid of them. The Edomites were descendants of Isaac and Abraham and would be allowed to stay in the land God had given them unless they became too wicked. God even told the Israelites that they were not to try to punish the Edomites in the future for this rude refusal to them. On the other hand, the Canaanites who occupied the Promised Land had filled up their cup with such great wickedness that the judgment of God was that they must be destroyed.

If Israel had allowed God to lead them through Edom, the Edomites would have benefitted both spiritually and financially. The Edomites could have learned about the God of their ancestors and seen firsthand how God blessed and protected those who honor and love Him. But instead, Israel was turned back to the desert to go around the Edomite territory.

When they reached Mount Hor, God told Moses to bring Aaron and Eleazar up onto the mountain where the high priesthood would be passed to his son, and he

would be laid to rest. Aaron and Moses had lived long lives, and experienced many trials, but also great honor from God. Both brothers had great natural ability, that that had been made even greater by their close communion with God. Side by side for 40 years they had served God and their people tirelessly and unselfishly, but now they would be separated. They were sad that they would not experience the Promised Land, but they had accepted their punishment without rebellious feelings toward God. Aaron, at the age of 123 was 3 years older but he had been called by God to support his younger brother. But God had also honored him and his family with the priesthood. In his 40 years of service, Aaron was not without fault. His first mistake was when he made the golden calf for the people at Sinai. The second was when he joined with Miriam in complaining about always taking orders from their younger brother Moses. The last was when he and Moses disobeyed God and struck the rock. Both brothers were supposed to be examples of Christ to the people, and that is what made their sin worse. The consequences of a sin can never be undone; in fact, it is possible that a lifetime of good works might not erase the result of one act.

The Israelites were not told what would happen on the mountain, but they knew that Moses and Aaron would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Since Eliezar went with them, they suspected that Aaron might not come back. When Moses and Eliezar came down the mountain alone, the people mourned for Aaron for 30 days. God is not honored today when funerals, at great expense, with excessive displays of grandness, mark the death of important people.

The loss of Aaron affected Moses more than anyone. It reminded him of his own coming death, but more importantly, he missed his most constant companion and co-worker of the last 40 years.

After they left Mount Hor, the Israelites were attacked by Arad, a Canaanite king, who took some of the people as prisoners. But when they prayed for help, God helped them defeat their enemy, and the Israelites destroyed their cities. Instead of being grateful to God for His help, they became proud of their victory and began to complain that they hadn't been allowed to do the same 40 years before. They thought they could have been victorious then just as easily as they were this time.

As they continued their journey around Edom, they came to an especially hot, dry place with no shade and nothing green. The Israelites began to dwell on their discomforts, and the fact that they were moving away from the Promised Land, and soon began the same old complaints against Moses, "Why did you take us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no food or water except this manna that we're sick of." Moses told the people that God had so miraculously provided for and protected them in the wilderness that they had no idea how much danger they

were in. The pillar of cloud had provided shade from the heat, and the pillar of fire warmth by night. Miraculously, there were no weak or sick among them, and their clothes and shoes didn't wear out, and God even kept their feet from swelling up from all the walking.

The Israelites had even been protected from dangerous animals, but now because of their ungratefulness and complaining, God withdrew His protection against the fiery serpents. These snakes were called fiery because of the terrible and deadly effect from their bites which quickly caused great swelling, followed by death. They kept complaining about dying in the wilderness, and now God let it happen. Suddenly, there was terror and confusion everywhere, with so many people dying or already dead. People who had not been bitten were doing their best to care for and comfort those who were dying. They finally realized their sin and went to Moses and said, "We have sinned, by speaking against God and you. Please pray to God and ask Him to take away the serpents."

But God did not take away the serpents and instead told Moses to make a brass serpent and lift it up so that all could see it. He then told them that all who were bitten simply had to look at the brass serpent, and God would heal them. Many had already died, and because of lack of faith, others who refused to look died also. But most were even helped by their friends and family to look and be instantly healed. There was a lesson in the way God dealt with the snake crisis. Only those who believed and obeyed were healed. With the sacrificial system, many had thought it was the offering, or what they had to give up, that paid the price for their sin. This was a lesson, that the animal they gave up, or its death, was not what paid for their sin, but it was to remind them that Christ would be the great sacrifice, so that all who believed could be saved from sin. [John 3:14](#) And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. [John 3:14-15 NLT](#).

The sinner cannot save themselves, but they must believe and accept the gift of salvation to be saved. If we do, Jesus said, [John 6:37](#) ... those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. [John 6:37 NLT](#). In fact, this is the only way that the sinner can be saved from the penalty of death. [Acts 4:12](#) There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." [Acts 4:12 NLT](#).

Many are unwilling to look at the cross and accept salvation on faith, even though they can see the positive changes in the lives of those who have. God will never remove every single doubt, but He gives enough evidence on which to base our faith. All who were bitten by the serpents who required a complete understanding before they would look, died.

## ***Chapter 39—The Conquest of Bashan***

This chapter is based on [Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11](#).

In their detour around Edom, the Israelites had finally made the turn and were heading back in the direction of the Promised Land. They traveled on a high plain and the cooler air was a welcome change from the hot desert air. On their way to the Promised Land, they would pass by the Moabites and Ammonites, but God said not to disturb them, because He had given the land of Ar to the descendants of Lot. Further north, they approached the territory of the Amorites, who had formerly lived on the other side of the Jordan but had expanded into the territory on this side of the river, even taking some land from the Moabites. They had a strong military and controlled the territory from the Arnon river in the south to the Jabbok in the north.

The Israelites needed to pass directly through the land controlled by the Amorites, so Moses sent a polite message to Sihon, the Amorite king. "Please give us permission to pass through your land. We will not leave the highway, and we will buy food and water from your people." The response from the Amorites was an absolute NO, and they immediately assembled their army to stop the Israelites from moving forward. The Amorites were well trained and well equipped, and Israel was no match for them. But Moses told the people that as long as they were following God's orders, they had nothing to fear. The order from God was clear, "Get up, start moving forward and cross the Arnon River. I have given you victory over Sihon, king of the Amorites, and you will take possession of Heshbon, and all his land. After this, any country that hears about this battle, will be afraid of you."

When Abraham saw the vision of what would happen to the Israelite descendants of his, God told him that the Amorites of his generation were not so wicked that they had to be destroyed then [[Genesis 15:16](#)]. Now, after seeing what God had done for Israel, and then directly opposing them, they made themselves ready for destruction. The Israelites obeyed God and crossed the river, and a battle took place, but God fought for Israel, and they had complete victory over the Amorites, leaving no survivors.

Moving on, the next kingdom that stood in their way was Bashan. This was a very large nation with many people, and 60 cities with high walls, gates, and even iron bars, as well as many unwallled towns. This nation had giant ancestors and they themselves were big and strong, but also violent and cruel, so that even the surrounding countries feared them. In addition to that, the Og, the king of Bashan, was a giant among a nation of giant descendants. But when Bashan came out with

their army to fight, God again fought for Israel and Bashan was destroyed, leaving no survivors.

Next in their path, was Edrei, who like Bashan, had a giant king. They even had a backup plan which was to retreat to a high plain behind their territory, which had steep narrow approaches and lots of places to hide. But their king was so confident that he marched out with his army to meet Israel on the wide open plain. When the Israelites saw the giant king towering over his people, and the great army that accompanied him, they were very afraid. But Moses said, "Do not be afraid, God will deliver him into your hands, and you will destroy all his cities, just like you did to Sihon." When the battle began, the enemy became confused, disorganized, and scattered and they were defeated.

With the defeat of Gilead and Bashan, the Israelites began to realize that 38 years before, even though the report of the spies may have been correct about giants and great walled cities, it made no difference when God fought for them. If Israel had obeyed God 38 years before, the people in the Promised Land were more afraid, less prepared, and taking over the Promised Land would have been easier. Now those who occupied the Promised Land had been preparing for 38 years, and were stronger, and more ready to fight back.

God still tests people today by allowing trials and difficulties and seeing whether they will trust Him. If they fail, the next trial will be greater, and this will continue until they either pass the test, or in rebellion against God are left in darkness. Difficulties or trials will seemingly disappear, if we will only move forward in faith, and trust in God.

## *Chapter 40—Balaam*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 22-25](#).

The Israelites had now returned to the banks of the Jordan River and were camped across the river from Jericho. They were also on the border of the land of Moab, whom they had not disturbed, at God's command. The Moabites were very afraid because Israel had defeated the Amorites who had taken some of their cities. Now the Israelites were in possession of those cities, and the Moabites wanted to do something to stop them. They were too afraid to directly attack them, so they decided to try to gain an advantage by magic and sorcery.

Balaam, who had once been a prophet of God, had a reputation of having magical powers. Balak, the king of Moab, sent messengers to Balaam in Mesopotamia, offering him great wealth if he would come curse the Israelites. The message was, "There are some people who have come up out of Egypt, that are spreading out over the face of the earth, and they are now on my border. They are too strong for me, but if you come curse them, then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of my land, because I know that whoever you pronounce a blessing on is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed."

Balaam still claimed to be a prophet of God, and he was familiar with the people Balak was referring to. He knew he should not even consider this offer to curse God's people, but he really wanted the reward. So instead of immediately sending the messengers away, he told them to stay the night and let him ask God if he could do it. That night in a dream, Balaam was told that he could not go and curse the Israelites because they are blessed. To his credit, Balaam told the ambassadors to go back to Balak and tell him that God would not allow him to take this job.

Satan often uses the promise of wealth to entice men give up working for God. Many think they can go against their conscience and take a job here and there to make some extra money and then return to being faithful to God when they are financially secure. But once they get tangled in Satan's trap, most cannot escape.

When the messengers returned to Balak and told him that Balaam had turned down his offer, he assumed Balaam was holding out for a better offer. So, he sent more important people, with this message, "Don't let anything stop you from coming to help me. I will give you great honor in my kingdom and will also give you anything else you want. Just come do this one thing for me."

Balaam said the right things to this second group of messengers, when he told them that no amount of money could get him to go against the command of God, but he really wanted the reward. He told them to stay for the night so he could ask God

again for permission, as if he could get God to change His mind. Balaam was surprised and excited when God told him, "You can go with them, but you will only be able to say what I allow you to say."

There are many today, who like Balaam already know what they want to do when they ask God what they should do. Many times, God will seem to give His permission, but He is just honoring their free will, and He knows there will be consequences for their actions. [Psalm 81:11](#) "But no, my people wouldn't listen. Israel did not want me around. <sup>12</sup> So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their own ideas. [Psalm 81:11-12 NLT](#)."

The messengers thought they had already received Balaam's response and had already left by the time he came to find them the next day. So, fearing that God would take back His permission, Balaam didn't want to wait another night, and he got on his donkey and left immediately. To make sure that Balaam would know that this was not His will, God sent an angel to block his way, but only the animal could see it. When the donkey saw the angel blocking the path, he turned off into the field, but Balaam saw nothing, so he beat the animal. Next the angel moved to a narrow passage and when the donkey tried to squeeze by on the side it crushed Balaam's leg against the wall, so he beat the donkey harder and forced it to continue. Finally in a narrower place that the donkey could not squeeze by, when it saw the angel blocking its way again, it refused to go forward and knelt on the ground. Balaam had completely lost his patience with the animal, and started beating it, worse than before, with his staff. [Numbers 22:28](#) Then the LORD gave the donkey the ability to speak. "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?" it asked Balaam. [Numbers 22:28 NLT](#)."

Balaam was so angry he answered the donkey as if he was speaking to a person. "Because you have disobeyed me, and injured me, and I'm so angry at you that if I had a sword, I would kill you." Then the donkey answered, "Have I not been reliable ever since you first got me? Have I ever done this to you before?" Balaam answered, "No." Finally, he was allowed to see the angel with sword drawn, ready to kill him, and the angel asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey, I have been blocking your way because what you are trying to do is not the will of God. If your donkey had not turned aside or stopped when it saw me, I would have killed you but saved her."

Balaam claimed to be a prophet and was able to see God in in a dream, but he was so blinded by greed, that he could not see the angel blocking his path. How many are like Balaam, doing things that are wrong, and then get angry at people who try to save them from destruction. The Bible even has something to say about the treatment of animals. [Proverbs 12:10](#) The godly care for their animals, but the wicked

are always cruel. [Proverbs 12:10 NLT](#). [Psalm 145:9](#) The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation. [Psalm 145:9 NLT](#). Animals may have been created to serve us, but we have no right to be cruel to them, after all they are already suffering because of man's sin. Whoever abuses animals that they own are both cowardly and cruel, and this behavior toward either people or animals is satanic.

When confronted by the angel, Balaam offered to turn back, but he was again given permission to go with the knowledge that he would only be able to speak what God allowed. When he was met by Balak, on his arrival, he told him that he would only be able to speak words that God put in his mouth. By this God would show Balak, that the Israelites were under His protection, and no one could harm them without His permission.

The king figured it was worth a try since Balaam was there, so they went up to a mountain overlooking the Israelite camp. Knowing God's will on the matter, Balaam still thought he might be able to get his way. Knowing something about the Israelite sacrificial system, he attempted to buy God's permission with many sacrifices. He ordered them to set up 7 altars and sacrificed a bull and a ram on each one, then went to pray and waited to see what God would say to him. When he came back to Balak and the others who were impatiently waiting, he began: "Balak, the king of Moab brought me from Aram in the east, asking me to curse Israel. But how can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I say anything bad about a people the Lord had not condemned? I see you now, a people that have kept themselves separate from other nations. There are so many of you, who can even count a 4th of your population? Let me die as if I was a righteous person and end up like the people of Israel."

Balaam had been told the Israelites were a disorganized band of people, wandering around, attacking and terrorizing the nations. But what he saw was an entirely different picture. He saw that the camp was arranged in a very clear and organized way, and the people seemed to be disciplined and orderly. The words Balaam spoke were a prophecy of Israel, which have been fulfilled in how they have kept their national identity through the years, even though they have been scattered all over the world. Balaam saw things in vision that went along with the words God put in his mouth. He saw the people of God after Israel rejected Him, and how they grew in number and prospered until the end of time. He even saw what happened after God's people die, when they are resurrected, and given honor, glory and everlasting life. He desired to have the same reward in the afterlife as the faithful people of God.

Balak could not believe what he just heard come out of Balaam's mouth. "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies and you have blessed them." But Balaam said, "Didn't I tell you that I could only speak the words that God would allow me to say." Even after that Balak was not willing to give up his idea of cursing the Israelites. So, he brought Balaam to another location where he could only see a part of the camp of Israel, a place named Pisgah. Here, 7 more altars were built and sacrifices were offered on them just as before. Then Balaam spoke the words God gave him, "God is not a man that lies, nor is He a human that needs to repent. Has He ever said anything and not done it? I have been given words of blessing, and I cannot change it. He does not find sin in Jacob, nor is there evil in Israel. God is with them, and He is their king. No curse can affect them, and no magic can work against them." While under the direct protection of God, no people, nation, or even Satan's power can work against them.

Balak said, "If you can't curse them, at least don't bless them!" But even still he was not willing to give up, and took Balaam to Mount Peor, the site of a temple of Baal. 7 sacrifices were offered again, and Balaam went off to receive the message from God. When he came back, the Spirit of God again spoke through him. "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, and your houses, O Israel! They are like gardens beside the river, and tall cedar trees beside the water. Their descendants will have everything they need, and their king will be greater than Agag. Israel is like a lioness crouched and ready to attack, who dares to attract her attention. Whoever blesses you will be blessed, but whoever curses you will be cursed."

Balak was enraged that Balaam had accepted his request, giving the hope that he could curse Israel despite his disclaimer. Balak said, "Get out of here! Go home. I was going to give you great power and a position in my kingdom, but God has kept you from receiving that honor." But God was not done with His blessing yet, and Balaam continued speaking. "A Star will come out of Jacob, and a Scepter will rise out of Israel." Then Balaam continued, predicting the eventual destruction of Moab, Edom, Amalek, and the Kenites.

Balaam returned home, but he was consumed with the desire to receive the rewards that Balak was dangling in front of him. He knew that Israel's protection from God depended on their obedience to His commandments. He realized that if he could get the Israelites to sin, it would have the same effect as a curse on them. With this idea, he quickly hurried back to Balak and shared his plans. Balak immediately agreed to the plan and Balaam stayed to help implement it. The plan was for women to entice the Israelite men to sin and then bring them to the temple of Baal and Ashtaroath for worship. Thousands of men fell for this temptation and were punished with death, but the women were killed as well. Even some of the leaders of Israel sinned and were put to death, and before it was over 24,000 Israelite men

had died. After the guilty were punished, God then commanded the Israelites to destroy the Moabites for leading them into sin, and in the battle, Balaam was killed.

There were similarities between the downfall of Balaam and Judas. Balaam tried to use his reputation as a prophet to secure wealth and power, while Judas joined the disciples and followed Jesus, hoping for wealth and power in His kingdom. Both men were highly privileged by their connection with God, but their desire for wealth and power led to their downfall. It is dangerous for us to have a sin that we love and are unwilling to let go of. Even if a person has many good character traits and abilities, one sin can drag a person down, opening the way for Satan to lead them to ruin. We should pray to God each day to help us not to slip and fall into sin. [Psalm 17:5](#) My steps have stayed on your path; I have not wavered from following you. [Psalm 17:5 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 41—Apostasy at the Jordan*

This chapter is based on [Numbers 25](#).

The previous chapter was the story of Balaam, and this chapter will describe in more detail what occurred in the Israelite camp at the same time. They had just come back from their victory over Bashan, and were confident that with God's help, that they would soon begin to take possession of Canaan. Only the Jordan River separated them from the Promised Land. Across the river from where they camped was Jericho, which was called "the city of palm trees," because of all the palm trees in and around the city.

On the east side of the river was a high plain, with a tropical climate, on which grew many acacia trees. It was a comfortable place to camp, but a great danger existed among the beautiful surroundings. Baal was the primary god in that area, and the worship of Baal involved sexual acts that were both degrading and tempting. There in a life of relative ease, with too much free time on their hands, they were in a position where they could easily fall into temptation.

As Moses was making plans to take possession of the land, the people had nothing to do, and Balaam's plan was beginning to be put into action. Women started sneaking into camp, and tempted the men to sin, and then introduced them to the sinful practices of Baal worship, and then even sacrifice and worship of the false god. These women were very successful and soon this sin was spreading like an infectious disease. Even the leaders of the nation of Israel were guilty. Though he had failed to curse Israel, Balaam had finally succeeded in getting Israel to bring a curse upon themselves.

When Moses realized what was happening, he became angry. God then sent a deadly disease that spread among the sinners, and He commanded that the leaders who had sinned should be killed, and their bodies be put on display, so that all would know that a person's importance or position would not save them from the consequences of their sin. Some who repented came to the tabernacle, and in great humility, confessed their sin. And while people were crying at the door of the tabernacle, and the plague was still killing people, one of the leaders of Israel named Zimri, boldly walked through the camp with a Midianite princess. Phinehas, the son of Eliezar the high priest, stood up, grabbed a javelin and followed Zimri to his tent, and killed them both. After that the plague stopped, and God said this about Phinehas, "He has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, so I will make a covenant of peace with him, and his descendants will always be priests."

Some of those who died in the plague for their sin were the last survivors from the older generation that had rebelled nearly 40 years ago. When the people were counted, there was not a single person left over the age of 58, except for Joshua and Caleb [[Numbers 26:64-65](#)]. After the guilty were punished, those who led them into sin were also punished, starting with the Midianites, the people of Balaam and Cozbi, the woman who tempted Zimri to sin. There were 5 kings of Midian, who were all killed, and Balaam, the son of Beor was also killed. Even the women were not spared because of their role in leading Israel into sin [[Numbers 31:8-17](#)].

When the nation of Israel was not in rebellion against God's law, nothing could harm them, but when they were sinning, they would not have been able to stand against their enemies. Women are a very great tool in the hands of Satan, to tempt men to sin. [Proverbs 7:26](#) For she has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims. [Proverbs 7:26 NLT](#). The children of Seth, before the flood, were drawn away from faithfulness to God by the daughters of Cain. Joseph was tempted by a woman but stood firm. Samson was led to ruin by a prostitute. David stumbled because he took a beautiful woman who was married. Solomon, with all his wisdom, became a slave to many women, and worshipped their idols.

Breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment is one of Satan's greatest tools, and he uses it with great success against rich, and powerful, as well as the poor and working class. By becoming a slave to passion and sensuality, the mind becomes numb to breaking God's laws. It can send a person in a downward spiral of doing worse and worse things, until people made in the image of God, completely abandon themselves to their sinful desires, becoming like animals acting on instinct.

Satan tempts God's people today with worldly pleasures, but God wants His people to separate themselves from the world. [2 Corinthians 6:17](#) Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. [2 Corinthians 6:17 NLT](#). <sup>1</sup> [John 2:15](#) Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. [1 John 2:15 NLT](#). [James 4:4](#) You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. [James 4:4 NLT](#). We should not place ourselves in the path of temptation, then pray "Lead us not into temptation."

When people are living a life of ease and comfort, with too much free time, they are more easily led to sin. Self-confidence from success can also lead some to lower their guard against temptation. Satan knows that faithful followers of God will often not easily fall into great open sin. But little by little, in private, he tempts

them with small things that may not seem too bad. But eventually, if they continue on the path Satan is leading them on, sin that was once hated, will become pleasant.

Satan uses everything he can to glorify sin, including books, movies, and theater. Characters that are portrayed as heroes, are guilty of breaking many of God's laws, most often, killing and sexual indulgence. The prayer of David should be ours, [Psalm 51:10](#) Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. [Psalm 51:10 NLT](#). There is something we can do to help ourselves to resist temptation. We can avoid reading, seeing, and hearing things that will give us impure thoughts. [Philippians 4:8](#) And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. [Philippians 4:8 NLT](#). This is not possible without prayer, Bible study, and the help of the Holy Spirit. [Psalm 119:11](#) I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. [Psalm 119:11 NLT](#).

Israel's sin at Beth-peor brought God's judgement on them immediately, but today the same actions do not seem to have the same consequences. But in the end, the consequences will be the same. [1 Corinthians 3:17](#) God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. [1 Corinthians 3:17 NLT](#). People will sometimes succeed in hiding unfaithfulness from their marriage partner, but there will always be consequences. Sometimes, they will be in the form of disease, but if they do not suffer natural consequences, they will stand in the judgement before God. [Proverbs 5:3](#) For the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. <sup>4</sup> But in the end she is as bitter as poison, as dangerous as a double-edged sword. [Proverbs 5:3-4 NLT](#). [Proverbs 2:18](#) Entering her house leads to death; it is the road to the grave. <sup>19</sup> The man who visits her is doomed. He will never reach the paths of life. [Proverbs 2:18-19 NLT](#).

## ***Chapter 42—The Law Repeated***

This chapter is based on [Deuteronomy 4-6](#); [28](#).

God finally told Moses that the time had come for Israel to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. He looked across the river at the land of promise and even wondered if he might be allowed to go with them. So, he asked God if he could go with them across the river and experience the good land. God answered, "Do not mention this again, now go up to the top of Pisgah and get a view of the land in all directions, but you will not cross over the Jordan."

God then told Moses to take Joshua, and stand with him before Eleazar the high priest, and all the people. Joshua had been a faithful assistant to him, and a man of wisdom, and faith, and would now be taking his place as the human leader of the nation. Moses was to lay his hands on Joshua in the sight of all the people, so that the Israelites would obey him. Joshua would not be able to talk with God the way Moses did, but he could go to Eleazar with his questions, and God would give yes or no answers through the Urim on the breastplate of the high priest.

The final act of Moses was a command of God to remind the people of their history as a nation, from the time they left Egypt, until the present. When the law was given on Sinai, it was their parents who had heard it and committed to obey. Now that they were adults, they would hear the law of God and make their own commitment to obey it or not. They would be reminded that the blessings and promises of God depended on their obedience to His law.

As Moses stood before the people, his face glowed with the light of heaven. His hair was white, but his eyesight was clear, and he looked much younger than his age. With deep emotion, Moses desired to communicate to the people the great love and mercy of God.

"In the entire history of the world, have you ever heard of a nation hearing the voice of God speaking out of the fire like you did and remain alive? Have you ever heard of an entire nation being delivered, with miraculous power, out of the hands of another nation, as God did when He delivered you from Egypt? God didn't love you or choose you because you were a mighty nation, but because of the promise He made to your ancestors. You need to know that Jehovah is your God, and that He is faithful, and reliable, and keeps His promises to those who keep His commandments, even to a thousand generations." [[Deuteronomy 7:7-9](#)].

The Israelites had often blamed Moses for their troubles and thought he had personal motives for bringing them out of Egypt. As Moses reminded them of the sins and rebellion of their parents, they began to realize that it was not the fault of

Moses or God that they had wandered in the wilderness for so long. If their parents had trusted in God's leading and obeyed His commandments, they would already be living in the Promised Land as a holy, happy people. In fact, their lack of faith, and the long delay, brought dishonor on God in the eyes of the surrounding nations. Understanding the great value of the law, Moses told the people that they had something no other nation had, and that if they kept the law, they would become a great nation that would be admired and respected.

Moses continued, "You may have heard that the land of Egypt was good, but you had to carry water to your plants. But the land that God is giving you is so much better. The hills and valleys are watered with rain from heaven, and there are also rivers, and underground water sources, all of which make it easy to grow wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates. It is a land of olive oil and honey, which will provide an abundance of food. You will even find plenty of iron and copper in the ground." [[Deuteronomy 11:10-12](#); [Deuteronomy 8:7-9](#)].

"When God finally brings you into the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you will inherit great cities that you did not build, houses full of things that you didn't have to buy or make, wells you did not dig, and orchards and vineyards you did not plant. When you have had plenty to eat, be sure to not forget the covenant you made with the Lord your God. If you do what is evil in God's eyes, you will lose the land you are going over the Jordan to inherit." [[Deuteronomy 6:10-15](#)].

But Moses knew the tendency of the people to disobey God, so he told them again in great detail the blessings they would receive if they were obedient, and the curses that would fall on them if they disobeyed. "If you are careful to obey everything the Lord commanded, your cities will prosper, and your fields will produce abundant harvests, and both you and your livestock will multiply and be healthy. Wherever you go you will be blessed, and any enemy that rises up against you will be destroyed. You will be so successful and produce so much food, that you will have to store it, and even the storage facilities will be blessed by God."

"But if you do not obey the Lord your God, and keep all His commandments, you will be cursed. Even the surrounding nations will realize that you are cursed. You will be scattered throughout the world, and will worship gods, that neither you nor your fathers have even heard of. You will not have rest or ease in the nations you have been dispersed to, and you will always be worried and fearful. You will never be content with the present and will always be wishing it would pass."

Then in prophetic inspiration, Moses saw the eventual downfall of the nation, and even the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. He said, "The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, a nation with a language unfamiliar to you, a fierce

nation which will show no mercy to either the old or young." Moses told of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, "He shall eat your animals, and the fruit of your land, until you have nothing left. He will lay siege to your city, and you will get so hungry you will eat your own children. The motherly and nurturing instinct of women will be gone, because they will see their children as food, and not even want to share it with their husband."

Moses ended with these words, "I have given you two choices today, life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose life, and love the Lord your God, and obey His words, and cling to Him. Then you will live long in the land the Lord promised to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [[Deuteronomy 30:19-20](#)].

To make it even easier for them to remember, Moses created a song, that told of the wonderful things God had done for them and spoke of future salvation and victory for all God's people. The Israelites were to memorize this poem of their history, and they were to teach it to their children, and their grandchildren. It was to be chanted by all when they gathered for worship and should be repeated individually as they performed their daily work. They were even told to repeat it when they sit down in their homes, when they get up to walk, when they lie down to sleep, and when they wake up. They should write it on the doorposts of their homes, and on their gates. It was a special privilege, but also a very important job to be the guardians and keepers of God's law on earth. That is why it was so important to memorize, repeat, and teach these words, so that as generation followed generation, they would never be forgotten. At any time in the future, if their children ever asked about God, His laws, and rules, and the reasons for all the things they did, this song or poem would be the answer to their questions.

Moses finished writing the laws and punishments for breaking them, and all the procedures for sacrifices, the sanctuary services, and even these words he had just spoken to them. He then gave it to the priests who were responsible for carrying the ark, to preserve it and keep it safe [[Deuteronomy 31:9](#)].

## *Chapter 43—The Death of Moses*

This chapter is based on [Deuteronomy 31-34](#).

God is loving and merciful, but He is also strict and fair. The history of the Israelite nation, which is the subject of much of the Bible, demonstrates this. His loving kindness to them is described as an eagle caring for her young in their nest and carrying them on her wings. But their history also told of punishment and destruction for disobeying and rejecting His laws. God's love was unquestionably demonstrated when Christ came to earth to show people what He was like. Christ showed great compassion for the poor, sick, and outcasts of society. But at His second coming, He will say to those who rejected His mercy, [Matthew 25:41](#) "... 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. [Matthew 25:41 NLT](#). When He was on earth, this is what He said about His law, [Matthew 5:18](#) I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. [Matthew 5:18 NLT](#).

Moses had been so faithful, and done so much good, but no amount of begging and pleading would change the sentence for his disobedience when he struck the rock. Now without bitterness, and still showing his love for Israel, he stood with Joshua at the tabernacle and with the pillar of cloud next to them, he spoke this message from God to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the children of Israel into the land that that God promised to give to their ancestors." Then he told the leaders who assisted in the administration of the nation, to be faithful and obey the instructions and the law that he had given them from God.

As the people looked at Moses, they had a new appreciation for his leadership, advice, and hard work for them. How often had their rebellion deserved punishment, when Moses had pleaded with God to spare them. Now they realized that their complaining and rebelliousness was what had provoked Moses to sin, and now he must die, while they lived and continued into the Promised Land.

Moses was told to climb Mount Nebo, alone, where he could see the land that the Israelites would inherit, then he would die. For the last time Moses gathered the people, and the Spirit of God come over him, and he spoke a blessing for each of the tribes [[Deuteronomy 33](#)]. When he finished, Moses turned toward the mountain, and completely alone, just walked away. At the top of the mountain, with clear eyesight, he saw the whole land, from the great sea to the west, Mount Hermon straight ahead to the north, and Moab and Bashan to the east. Moses had time to think about his life, and the hardships he had endured. He had given up power and honor in the court of Egypt, to identify with and suffer with his people.

He remembered how God had first appeared to him in the burning bush, and all the miracles that followed, starting with the plagues on Egypt. He remembered the rebellion, which resulted in the long years of wandering in the wilderness. He thought about the fact that out of all the adults who had left Egypt, only two were worthy to enter the Promised Land. Moses remembered the many times that rebellion had resulted in punishment for the people, and even the times he had pleaded with God to not entirely destroy the nation. He had chosen to suffer hardship with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, and he had no regret.

His one big mistake now occupied his thoughts. He had repented and received forgiveness for his sin, and he had faith that God had forgiven him. With that knowledge, he felt he was ready to die. Then God gave him a future view of the Promised Land. He saw it not as it was then, but what it would become, with God's blessings as the nation of Israel. He saw the beautiful mountains, cedar trees, olive groves, vineyards, and wheat and barley fields, and it seemed like the garden of Eden to him. It was the land he had described to Israel but seen in living color. But then he saw the sad history of their rejection of God, and the punishment they experienced because of their sins. He saw them dispersed among heathen nations, and then returned to the land of promise, only to be conquered by Rome.

Moses saw Jesus born in Bethlehem, angels singing to the shepherds, and wise men from the East, moved by words he wrote [[Numbers 24:17](#)]. He saw the humble life of Christ in Nazareth and His ministry of teaching and healing. He saw his people reject the Law Giver, while claiming the law as the reason for rejecting Him. He saw the agony of Christ in Gethsemane, the betrayal by Judas, the trial, the whipping, and the crucifixion. He saw the symbolic connection between the serpent he had lifted up on the pole, and the Savior who was lifted up on the cross [[John 3:14-15](#)]. He was shocked and filled with sadness as he saw the priests and rulers making fun of Jesus as He suffered on the cross. He saw the agony of Christ as He was separated from His Father, crying out, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?" [[Mark 15:34](#)]. But Moses also saw Him rising from the tomb, a conqueror over sin and death, taking to heaven with Him, a group who would be the first fruits of the resurrection of the righteous. He then realized, how small his hardships and trials were compared to the Son of God, and he rejoiced that in a small way, he was able to share in the suffering of Christ.

Moses saw the growth of Christianity, from the small and humble beginning, spread to all nations and languages and people. He saw how anyone who accepted Christ as their Savior, could be counted children of Abraham, and receive the blessings of the promise given to him. But then he saw Satan leading the Christian world to reject the law of God, while claiming to accept Christ. In the same way

that the priests and rulers that crucified Him cried, "Away with him! Crucify Him!" Christianity cried "Away with the law!" Moses wondered how those who claim to believe in Christ, could reject the law spoken by His own voice? He saw a small group, who still accepted the whole law of God, persecuted by the church and governments of the earth. Finally, he saw the second coming of Christ in glory, and the resurrection of the righteous, taken to heaven, together with those who were saved from among the living.

Then he saw the new earth, free of sin, more beautiful than the Promised Land, filled with the people of God from all nations. In that Promised Land, there would be no more sin and no more death. The vision ended and Moses was again looking at the Promised Land. Then like one taking a nap, Moses laid down and died. No person was there in his last moments, and no one knew the place where he was buried. If they had, some would have wanted to build a shrine, and idolize Moses over the place where he was buried. So, angels buried the body and stood guard.

There was never another prophet in Israel like Moses, who spoke to Jehovah face to face, and did the kind of signs and wonders that he did. If Moses had not made that one mistake, he would have entered the Promised Land, and then God would have taken him to heaven without dying. But as it was, he would not remain in the tomb for long. Christ Himself would exercise His power over death, and bring Moses back to life, and then take him to heaven. This would be the first time God had taken one of Satan's captives from the grave, but it would not be the last. Satan was even there with his angels, to try to prevent Christ from taking the body of Moses. God could have tried to reason with him, but He simply said, [Jude 1:9](#) ... "The Lord rebuke you!" (This took place when Michael was arguing with the devil about Moses' body.) [Jude 1:9 NLT](#).

Moses did suffer the consequence of sin, when he died, but because he had repented, God gave him life again. But Moses was not raised with his earthly body to continue life on earth, he received a new body, in which he would live forever with his friend, God. The case of Moses demonstrated both the justice and the love of God. Because he disobeyed, he was punished by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land, but because he was faithful, he received a much better reward, by being allowed to enter the heavenly Promised Land. Years later, when Moses and Elijah stood with Jesus when He was transfigured, the prayer of Moses was answered when he stood on that mountain, in the land promised to Israel.

Moses was symbolically connected to Christ, in fact he wrote, [Deuteronomy 18:15](#) Moses continued, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. [Deuteronomy 18:15 NLT](#). But in some ways, Moses was not like Christ because he needed to be disciplined

and trained for his role, in leading the Israelites to the earthly Promised Land. Jesus needed no discipline or training because He was perfect, but He was tempted, so He could sympathize with us who are tempted. Moses died for his mistake, but Jesus died, even though he made no mistake, so that all who accept the gift of salvation, can enter the heavenly Promised Land. [Hebrews 3:5](#) Moses was certainly faithful in God's house as a servant. His work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later. <sup>6</sup> But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ. [Hebrews 3:5-6 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 44—Crossing the Jordan*

This chapter is based on [Joshua 1-5:12](#).

The Israelites were very sad over the loss of Moses. While he was alive, they had taken him for granted and had complained and made his life difficult. But now that he was gone, they realized how much they missed his advice, his patience, and especially his faith. Even though Moses was gone, the memory of that holy, unselfish life would still be an influence for good. In fact, faithful servants of God have always left an influence on the world, long after they are gone. The memory of their words and acts, their example, and the things they wrote can live on forever. [Psalm 112:6](#) Such people will not be overcome by evil. Those who are righteous will be long remembered. [Psalm 112:6 NLT](#).

The pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, reassured the Israelites that even though Moses was gone, God would continue to lead and guide them. It was God's choice that Joshua was now the human leader they would depend on. During the time in the wilderness Joshua had always led the army and had been second in command to Moses. He had always shown courage, loyalty, unselfishness, obedience, decisiveness, and most of all great faith in God.

Joshua was hesitant to assume this role until God assured him with these words, "I will be with you just as I was with Moses. I will never leave you nor forsake you. So, be strong and courageous, and keep the law that My servant Moses wrote down for you. Do not turn from it and you will succeed in everything you do." Then God told Joshua, "Pack up and cross over the Jordan River, and I will give the children of Israel the land that I promised to them."

While he waited for God to give him detailed instructions on how to cross the river, he sent 2 men to spy on the city of Jericho which was right across the river from where they camped. Jericho had tall and strong walls, and from a human standpoint, it did not appear that the Israelites had the ability to take the city. This encounter would be a good example of how they would receive the rest of the land that God had promised them.

The people of Jericho were terrified, and on high alert, and the spies had to be saved and hidden by a woman named Rahab. She helped them at great risk to her own life, but she had a growing faith in the God of Israel. She told the spies, "We have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea when you came out of Egypt. Then after seeing how you just completely destroyed the 2 Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, on the other side of the river, we lost all hope of standing against you, because your God is in control of both the heavens and the earth." In return for her help, the spies promised that she would be saved when the city was taken.

When the 2 spies returned to Joshua, they told him, "Truly the Lord has given us the Promised Land, because all the people are terrified of us." After this Joshua told the entire camp of Israel to prepare 3 days of food for themselves, and he put the army on alert. But knowing that more instructions from God were needed before they could move forward, including how to cross the river, Joshua went beyond the outskirts of the camp to pray. That night God told him in great detail how they should proceed.

The next day Joshua told the people, prepare yourselves, by putting away your sins, because God is going to do some miraculous things for you. He told them, "The ark of the covenant carried by Levites will lead the way. When you see it move, you will know it is time to go." When the priests reached the Jordan, they were to keep walking, and when they reached the middle of the river stop, while everyone crossed downstream from them. Joshua said, "You will know that the living God is among you, and that He will drive out the Canaanites from the land, so follow the ark of His covenant, and watch as He crosses the Jordan before you."

The people were told to leave a half of a mile between them and the ark, and then to follow. When the Levites carrying the ark reached the river and stepped in, the raging river was suddenly pushed upstream and began to pile up while the water downstream flowed away leaving dry ground. The ark was carried to the middle of the river and then stopped, while the people crossed on dry land a half mile downstream. A man had been chosen from each tribe to pick up a large rock from the riverbed and bring it up on the bank of the Jordan river. Then the Levites carrying the ark could finish their crossing, and as soon as they stepped out of the riverbed, the water that had been piling up, rushed downstream again. The people were told that whenever their descendants would ask about the monument of rocks, they should tell them about the miracles performed by God to give them the land.

The miraculous crossing of the Jordan gave the Israelites confidence that even though Moses was gone, God was still leading and performing miracles for them under the leadership of Joshua. So, the people realized that God truly was with Joshua just as He had been with Moses, so they respected Joshua for as long as he lived. But the crossing did not go unnoticed by the people of Jericho or any spies that other nations might have sent to watch. The fear that this miracle caused among the nations of Canaan would make it easier for them to inherit the land God was giving them.

Since their rebellion at Kadesh 38 years before, circumcision of newborn males and the Passover celebration had been suspended. This was a reminder to them that the covenant they had with God had been suspended. Now that they had finally crossed into the Promised Land, as a symbol that the covenant would resume, all

the males needed to be circumcised. God said of Israel, "Today I have rolled away your disgrace," so they called the place Gilgal, which means "rolling away," or "rolling off."

The God of Israel had suffered disgrace in the eyes of the heathen, because the Israelites had failed to enter the promised land right away. But now a generation later, the crossing of the Jordan gave a new demonstration of His power, and the Canaanites were no longer making fun of Israel and her God. On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month, they celebrated Passover, and they ate corn off the land, and the next day there was no more manna. The wilderness wandering had ended, and they were in the Promised Land.

## *Chapter 45—The Fall of Jericho*

This chapter is based on [Joshua 5:13-15; 6-7](#).

From where Israel had crossed the Jordan River, they would have to go through Jericho to get to the rest of the land. Jericho was one of the strongest walled cities in the land of Canaan, and there was no chance that the Israelites could conquer the city with their own power. One of the main gods of the people of Jericho was Ashtaroath, goddess of the moon. This was one of the worst heathen religions in the land of Canaan.

Joshua left the camp to pray for guidance on what he should do. As he prayed, suddenly a tall man dressed for battle, with sword in hand, appeared in front of him. Surprised, Joshua asked, "Are you on our side or the side of our enemies?" The man answered, "I am the Captain of the armies of the Lord. Remove your shoes because you are on holy ground." It was Christ Himself that had appeared to Joshua, and he bowed down with his face to the ground. Joshua was given assurance that Jericho, its king, and all its warriors would fall, and he was told how to proceed.

Following the directions of God, Joshua assembled the army, 7 priests with ram's horn trumpets, and the ark carried by Levites. Part of the army went first, followed by the priests, the ark, and then the remainder of the armed men. For 6 days, the same procession silently marched around the city 1 time each day. With no attack, and not even a sound made, the people of Jericho began to get nervous. They were confident in their defenses against an armed attack, but they had heard about the parting of the Red Sea and had just watched the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River and wondered what this God would do to them. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the same procession marched around the city 7 times. This change brought even more fear and anticipation to the watchers from the city wall.

Upon completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> time around the city, the trumpets were blown, and everyone shouted, then the walls of the city began to tremble and shake, until they just came apart and fell to the ground. The people of Jericho were frozen with fear, as the army of Israel rushed into the city over the broken walls. They were not to take any prisoners, and the only items they were to take were containers made from gold, silver, iron and brass that would be used for the sanctuary services. Everything else was burned, because it was under a curse from God. The only people that were saved were Rahab, and the family that had gathered in her house. Even the site was cursed, and the city was never to be rebuilt as a walled city. The curse stated, "The man who rebuilds Jericho will lose his firstborn son when he lays the foundation, and his youngest son when he finishes the gates."

It may seem that a loving God would not order the destruction of all life in this way, but God was setting up His kingdom on earth, and this kind of wickedness could not coexist with it. The chances for repentance were when they saw or heard of the power of God in the miracles of the plagues on Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the kingdoms on the other side of the Jordan River. They were also aware of the punishment Israel suffered for taking part in some of the evil practices of their idol worship. Rahab was an example of how belief and acceptance of the God of Israel could have saved them. But like the people who died in the flood, the Canaanites had a knowledge of God and completely rejected Him.

Faith was required on the part of Israel before God brought the walls of Jericho down [[Hebrews 11:30](#)]. God only spoke to Joshua, and he told the Israelites what to do. If they had not obeyed, God would not have brought the walls down. This showed the Israelites that it was not military might but the power of God that would give them the Promised Land.

After Jericho was destroyed, the Israelites and even Joshua became overconfident. Spies were sent to Ai, and they decided, without asking God, that only a small group of 3000 was needed to take the city. But the people of Ai had not completely given up hope, and fought bravely, chasing the unprepared Israelites down the mountain, killing 36 in their victory. Joshua saw this defeat as a sign that God was punishing them for something. He went to the sanctuary, tore his clothes, and laid down with his face to the ground and prayed. "O Lord God, why have You brought us over the Jordan to let us be defeated by the Amorites? What will I say to the Israelites when they run from their enemies? Now the Canaanites will hear of this and will not fear us. What will you do to restore your great name?"

Jehovah answered, "Get up, why are you lying like that on your face? Israel disobeyed My command, and I will not be with you until the guilty is punished. Someone took some of the things from Jericho that I cursed and is hiding it." Joshua was told to draw lots to find out who it was, so that the person could be punished, so that the whole nation would no longer be held responsible. [Drawing lots was like blindly picking names from a hat, with the idea that God would direct the outcome.] The next day, the process began, and the tribe of Judah was chosen. Next, the family, was identified, then the household, and finally the man, Achan the son of Carmi. When Joshua stood face to face with Achan, he ordered him to confess his crime. Achan said, "Yes, I have sinned against the God of Israel. I saw some beautiful Babylonian clothing, and some gold and silver, and I took them and hid them in the ground under my tent." Men were sent to Achan's tent to dig up the things and bring them back. Then Joshua said, "Why have you brought trouble on

us? Now God will bring trouble on you." All Israel was held responsible for Achan's sin, and all Israel participated in his punishment by stoning him to death.

Achan had knowingly disobeyed the clear command of God, "Do not take anything from Jericho because it is cursed, and if you do, you will be cursed." The gold and silver were dedicated to the Lord, and by taking some, Achan was stealing from God. Wanting things that do not belong to you is breaking one of the commandments, but it often goes unpunished because no one else knows. But if that desire is not put away and repented of, it can lead to more open and punishable sin. Jesus warned, "You cannot serve God and money." [[Matthew 6:24](#)]. [Luke 12:15](#) Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." [Luke 12:15 NLT](#). Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira are other example in the New Testament of people that coveted and stole money that belonged to God.

Greed and the desire to accumulate money makes people unhappy with what they have. It can make the poor envious of the rich, and it can make the rich take advantage of the poor. It can lead to stealing what belongs to God, by not returning tithes and offerings to Him. [Malachi 3:8](#) "Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. [Malachi 3:8 NLT](#).

Achan's sin affected the whole nation, and in the same way, a church might be held responsible for the secret sins of one or a few. It is not the atheists or people who openly speak against God that the church should fear. It is the people who claim to be followers of Christ, that sin in secret, that can hold back the blessings of God from His people. If a church is having difficulty, and is not thriving spiritually, they should try to discover if there is any hidden sin among them that may be holding back God's blessing.

God is willing to forgive the sinner who confesses and repents, but in the case of Achan, he only confessed when he was found guilty, and the evidence was shown. In the same way when sinners are condemned in the judgment, they will acknowledge that they are guilty of the things they are charged with, but it is not a confession of repentance. They are forced to admit the truth, which shows that God's judgment is right and fair. Many who sin in secret and are not under condemnation from people or earthly courts, think that God will be merciful in the judgment, but when it is too late to repent, they will find that their sin cannot be forgiven, and they must suffer the consequences. At that time every secret sin will be made public, and no one will be able to deny the evidence that convicts them.

## ***Chapter 46—The Blessings and the Curses***

This chapter is based on [Joshua 8](#).

After Achan was punished, God told Joshua to assemble the army again to attack Ai. This time God would be with them and assure their success. After that, all thought and planning for taking the land was put on hold.

One of the last things Moses told them before he left was that everyone, including women, children, and foreigners, were all to gather at the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, and the valley of Shechem between them, to renew their covenant with God. To get there required a march to the center of the land, surrounded by enemies, but they were under God's protection.

The location for this assembly had a history with their ancestors. This was where Abraham built the first altar to Jehovah when he arrived from Ur. Both Abraham and Jacob lived here in their tents. In fact, Jacob had purchased the land, where he also dug a well, and buried the idols of his household after arriving back in Canaan. The bones of Joseph would also be buried here.

Shechem was one of the most beautiful locations in the land of Canaan, with olive groves, streams of water, and wildflowers. Mounts Ebal and Gerizim were on either side of the valley, but close enough that words shouted from one could be heard on the other. On Mount Ebal, a great stone monument was set up and the 10 commandments, and the laws written by Moses in a book were carved into it. An altar was built of natural, unshaped stones, on which sacrifices would be offered to God. 6 tribes gathered on Mount Gerizim, and the other 6 on Mount Ebal and Joshua stood with the ark between them. Then the 10 commandments written by God, and the law given by God and written by Moses were read for all the people to hear.

Everything that was read had been kept in and with the ark, but almost no one had access to it. Now everyone could read it for themselves on the stone monument on Mount Ebal. The Israelites were told, [Deuteronomy 11:18](#) "So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. <sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. <sup>20</sup> Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, <sup>21</sup> so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors. [Deuteronomy 11:18-21 NLT](#).

Moses also commanded that every 7<sup>th</sup> year, during the feast of tabernacles, men, women, children and foreigners were to gather for the reading of the law. That way, new people and young children who have never heard it before will learn the law so they can obey it and begin to love and respect the Lord your God.

Satan is always trying to twist what God has said, and to lead people into sin. For this reason, God has made His law very clear and easy to understand, so that those who look for it can find it, and through it be protected from the deceptions of Satan. Churches should teach and preach the stories written in the Bible, so people will learn about the blessings from God, but also the consequences of disobedience. Parents should also do the same with their children, and they should also speak often about the love, goodness, power, and greatness of God. The Bible is God's letter to us, and we should study it and always keep its words and lessons in our thoughts. If we did that, and obeyed it as well, it would provide guidance for us as the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire did for the Israelites.

## *Chapter 47—League with the Gibeonites*

This chapter is based on [Joshua 9-10](#).

After the rededication service in Shechem, the Israelites returned to Gilgal. At that time, they received a visit from some travelers, with clothes and sandals that were old and worn out, who appeared to have come from far away. They said that they had heard of the miracles that God had performed and wanted to make a peace treaty with the Israelites. God had told them not to make peace with any idolatrous nation in Canaan but had not said anything specific about nations far away. Joshua said how do we know you are telling the truth, and are not from the land of Canaan? So, they showed their bread which they claimed was fresh when they left but was now dry and moldy, and the wine skins that had been new which were torn and patched. Then without asking advice from God, Joshua and the leaders agreed to the peace treaty.

A few days later, they learned the truth, that the people they made a peace treaty with were the Gibeonites, who lived near the center of the land. They knew they could not win against the power of Israel's God and had resorted to trickery and lies to preserve their lives. The Israelites were angry about the deception, but they had promised, and since the Gibeonites said they would stop worshipping idols and accept the God of Israel, they were technically not considered idolators anymore. This incident is an example of the importance of keeping promises, even if the agreement was based on a lie, if it does not require disobeying God. [Proverbs 12:22](#) The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth. [Proverbs 12:22 NLT](#). [Psalm 15:4](#) ... and keep their promises even when it hurts. [Psalm 15:4 NLT](#).

The Gibeonites were a mighty nation that was not ruled by a king, but by representatives of the people. They had 4 cities, the greatest of which was called Gibeon. It would have been better for them if they had been honest, because renouncing idolatry and accepting God, would have made them eligible to be included in the covenant, as "the stranger that lives among you." God even gave the Israelites laws that protected the stranger that lived peacefully among them. [Leviticus 19:33](#) "Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. <sup>34</sup> Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God. [Leviticus 19:33-34 NLT](#). Even the national holidays, and religious services were to include foreigners. [Numbers 15:15](#) Native-born Israelites and foreigners are equal before the LORD and are subject to the same decrees. This is a permanent law for you, to be observed from generation to generation. [Numbers 15:15 NLT](#).

Even though they were mighty men, because of their deceit, they were condemned to be servants, cutting wood, and carrying water for as long as they lived in Israel. This showed God's hatred for lying.

5 Canaanite kings were angry with Gibeon for making peace with the Israelites, and united to punish them. Gibeon sent a message to Joshua, saying please come rescue your servants, because we are under attack. This time Joshua asked God what they should do, and God told him, go rescue Gibeon, and that not a single man would be left of the attacking kings. So, the Israelites marched all night and surprised the 5 kings, who were thrown into confusion by the attack, and ran for their lives. Then God sent a hailstorm with hail so large, that more people were killed by the hail than died in battle. But there were still many enemies alive, and Joshua saw that they would not be able to finish the battle before dark. So, he asked God to keep the sun from going down, so they could finish the job, and the sun stayed up in the sky for a whole extra day. Before the delayed night came, God's promise was fulfilled, and the enemies were completely defeated.

There was never a day like that, where Jehovah listened to the voice of one man, and stopped the sun from going down. This showed how the Lord was fighting for His people, Israel. Joshua did not ask for this miracle lightly. In preparation, he lay with his face to the ground for hours, praying for guidance, then he did everything in his power to carry out God's instructions. Men of prayer are men of power.

This miracle also showed to what extent nature is under the control of God. Satan tries to get people to study nature apart from God, and all who think nature is bigger than God are proved wrong by this event. God has all the elements of nature at His command if he wishes, [Psalm 148:8](#) fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him, [Psalm 148:8 NLT](#). [Job 38:22](#) "Have you visited the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of hail? <sup>23</sup> (I have reserved them as weapons for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war.) [Job 38:22-23 NLT](#). [Revelation 16:17](#) Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne in the Temple, saying, "It is finished!" ... <sup>21</sup> There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm. [Revelation 16:17, 21 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 48—The Division of Canaan*

This chapter is based on [Joshua 10:40-43](#); [11](#); [14-22](#).

The rest of southern Canaan was quickly taken because God fought for Israel. The northern kingdoms were afraid after seeing how easily the south was conquered, so Jabin, king of Hazor, led in uniting several kingdoms from the north to fight against Israel. This army was much larger than any that Israel had faced yet, and the number of soldiers was described as the grains of sand on the seashore. But God said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid. Tomorrow at this time they will all be dead, because I will have delivered them all into the hand of Israel."

Israel attacked the united forces near Lake Merom, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, until there was none left. Horses and chariots had been the great advantage of the Canaanites, but the Israelites were not to take and use them because God was their advantage, so the chariots were destroyed, and the horses were made unfit for use in battle.

The cities of the kings that were defeated were all taken, but Hazor was burned to the ground. After several more years of fighting, the major threats were all eliminated, and the land had rest from war. A few Canaanite nations were still left, but Joshua was an old man now and there was one more big job for him to do. The land needed to be divided among the tribes so they could finally receive their inheritance as promised to Abraham.

Joshua and Eleazar the high priest, were in charge of dividing the land, and one leader from each tribe would be present to receive their territory. The tribe of Levi did not receive their own land but were devoted to the sanctuary and its services. They instead were distributed throughout all the tribes in 48 cities that were given to them. The land was assigned by drawing lots [blindly picking names with the idea that God would make it come out the way He wanted]. Before the land was divided, Caleb came forward with a request. At the age of 85, he along with Joshua were the 2 oldest Israelites, and the only survivors of their generation. More than 40 years before, Caleb had been given a promise from God because of his faithfulness. "The land your feet have walked on will be your inheritance, and belong to your descendants forever, because you have been faithful in following Me." He asked for the land of Hebron, which is where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived in tents, and where they were buried in the cave of Machpelah. Hebron was still occupied by the Anakim, giants that the other 10 spies had feared so much, and Caleb said the Lord would be with him and help him to drive them out. In choosing land that had not been cleared yet, Caleb was also an example of

taking the responsibility for driving out the inhabitants from his own inheritance. So, Caleb drove out the 3 sons of Anak and took possession of his land.

The cowards and rebels who feared the giants, died in the wilderness, receiving what they deserved for their lack of faith. But those with faith received the inheritance that God had promised. Speaking of those who came after, Paul wrote, [Hebrews 11:33](#) By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions,<sup>34</sup> quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. [Hebrews 11:33-34 NLT](#). [1 John 5:4](#) For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. [1 John 5:4 NLT](#).

Another request was brought regarding the dividing of the land, this one from the descendants of Joseph, the tribe of Ephraim and half the tribe of Manasseh. They had already been given one of the best parts of the country including the fertile plain of Sharon, but much of their territory was still in the possession of Canaanites. Maybe they thought they could get special treatment, since they were related to Joshua. They had already received a large portion of the land, because they were one of the largest tribes, but now they asked for a double portion of land so they wouldn't have to fight to claim all of their territory. Joshua would have none of this complaining, and said, "If you are such a large and great tribe, go and defeat the Perizzites and the giants and claim the rest of your territory." If they had had the faith of Caleb, their victory would have been certain, because God would have fought with and for them. No enemy, even ones with iron chariots would have been able to stand against them.

Like Caleb, Joshua had also received a special promise of land from God, but Joshua waited until all the land was divided, before he made his request. He would build a city which was called Timnath-Serah, which appropriately meant, "the portion that remains." Even though he was the leader of the entire nation, Joshua humbly waited to the end and took what was left.

After the land was divided, it was decided that the sanctuary would be set up in Shiloh, in Ephraim, near the center of the land. It was safe for the Israelites to travel there from all parts of the country. The ark remained in Shiloh for 300 years until it was taken into battle by the sons of Eli and captured by the Philistines. The ark was never returned to Shiloh, or the sanctuary, but was finally moved by David to Jerusalem, and eventually installed in the temple that Solomon built.

Of the cities that were given to the Levites, 6 of them were called cities of refuge. The purpose was that if someone killed a person, they could flee to one of these cities to save their life, until they could be judged. Before this law existed, even if a

person accidentally killed someone, the family of the dead would usually punish the killer with death. In fact, it was the responsibility of the nearest relative, who was able, to avenge the death. Avenging death with death was not outlawed, in fact it was required if the accused was judged guilty. But even the accidental killer was not free of consequence. They had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, and if the avenger found them outside the walls of the city, according to the law, they could be killed. If the killer was judged to be guilty, they could not escape the death penalty. In fact, it is God's law from the time of Noah, [Genesis 9:6](#) If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in his own image. [Genesis 9:6 NLT](#). God even considered the land unclean if murderers were not punished with death [[Numbers 35:33](#)].

Another related law was a person could not receive the death penalty on the testimony of only one witness. [Numbers 35:30](#) "All murderers must be put to death, but only if evidence is presented by more than one witness. No one may be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. [Numbers 35:30 NLT](#). Jesus taught that this law of multiple witnesses could be applied in other cases as well. For example, if someone was doing something wrong to you and they wouldn't admit it. [Matthew 18:16](#) But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. [Matthew 18:16 NLT](#).

The city of refuge is a symbol of how we are protected from immediate death as sinners. The blood of Christ made this refuge and forgiveness possible. [Romans 8:1](#) So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. [Romans 8:1 NLT](#). It was the responsibility of the accidental killer to flee to the city of refuge. Nothing else could save them. If they delayed or got distracted and were caught outside the walls of the city, their life could be taken. As sinners, we are condemned to eternal death unless we take refuge in the forgiveness from Christ. If Satan is able to delay or distract us from getting to refuge in Christ, we will end up being punished for our own sins. The symbolism continues with being caught outside the city by the avenger. This would be like knowing your salvation is in Christ but disobeying anyway. [Hebrews 10:26](#) Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. <sup>27</sup> There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. [Hebrews 10:26-27 NLT](#).

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh had been given at their request, their land inheritance on the other side of the Jordan River. But as they had agreed to, they had sent their fighting men across the river with the rest of Israel and had

participated in the conquest of the land. Now that the land had been divided and it was up to the individual tribes to finish the job, they could return to their homes, and they did so with their share of the loot. They brought with them many animals, clothing, gold, brass, and iron.

Sometime later, it was reported to the 9.5 tribes that the 2.5 tribes on the east side of the river had set up an altar which went against the command of God. All sacrificial forms of worship were to be done at the sanctuary, and any violation of this command was punishable by death. Some hot heads proposed that they immediately declare war on the offenders to punish them for their sin so that the rest of Israel would not be punished because of them. But cooler heads, said, let go talk to them and see what they have to say. 10 representatives from each tribe, led by Phinehas, son of the high priest, went across the river to ask about this possible disobedience. The representatives were assuming the worst and accused the 2.5 tribes of rebelling against God which would bring His punishment on all Israel. They said, if the sanctuary is too far, or too hard to reach because of the river, they would make room for them on the west side of the river. But the 2.5 tribes quickly responded that it was not an altar, but a monument to remind their descendants that they worshipped the same God as their relatives on the other side of the river. So, to prevent any misunderstanding, they wrote on the monument, "This is a reminder to us that Jehovah is God."

Sadly, many times great conflict, and even fighting can happen because of a simple misunderstanding. The 9.5 tribes immediately assumed the worst and accused the 2.5 tribes of sin. If the 2.5 tribes had been equally aggressive, they might have ended up in a civil war. This is not to say that we should not oppose open sin, but we should not judge before the facts are known. When facts are known, sensitivity and gentleness should be used to try to win the sinner or sinners back. People are usually driven farther away if harshly attacked for their wrongs. But kindness, gentleness, and love may save many a sinner from the path of destruction.

God wants unity and love among His people, without sacrificing obedience to God.

[John 17:20](#) "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. <sup>21</sup> I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. [John 17:20-21 NLT](#). [John 13:35](#) Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." [John 13:35 NLT](#). <sup>1</sup> [Peter 3:8](#) Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

<sup>9</sup> Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it. [1 Peter 3:8-9 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 49—The Last Words of Joshua*

This chapter is based on [Joshua 23-24](#).

Possibly 20-30 years after the land had been divided, Joshua felt he was nearing the end of his life, so he asked that all Israel be gathered so he could speak to them one last time. When everyone was assembled, he reminded them of how God had fought for them to give them the land they now lived on. But many had settled down and were ignoring God's command to finish driving out or destroying the idolatrous nations still living among them. Now some of the Israelites were falling into sin because of the temptations still left among them.

Joshua said, "You have seen what the Lord your God did to the nations for you, and how He fought for you. God will drive out the rest of the people for you, so you can have their land, if you are careful to keep the law that Moses gave you. You know in your heart that God has done all the good things He promised He would do for you. So, you should realize that all the bad things He promised if you disobeyed, would surely happen as well. If that happens, you will quickly die off from the good land that He gave you."

Satan gets many to believe that God is so loving that He will overlook their sin. He convinces them that the bad things threatened by God against sinners are not literal. But it should be clear from the Bible what God thinks of sin, and how the natural result is misery and death, in this life or in the final judgment. God created life, and His law was given to keep that life going. But when the law was broken, suffering and death followed. It is only because our perfect Savior took the penalty of our sin on Himself that we have any hope of returning to the original plan of everlasting life.

Joshua gathered all Israel at Shechem, which was a place that had a lot of history with their ancestors, Abraham and Jacob. This is the place between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim where they had made their vows to God when they first entered the Promised Land. Now, the evidence that God had kept His promise was everywhere. They had received homes and cities that they did not build, vineyards and olive groves they did not plant, and they lived in peace in the land. Joshua reviewed their history, retelling the stories of the wonderful works of God, so that all would have a renewed sense of His love and mercy and would want to serve Him.

To make the event even more impressive and memorable, Joshua had the Levites bring the ark from the tabernacle in Shiloh. Joshua knew that there was some idol worship happening in secret in Israel and hoped that he could make an impression that would lead those individuals to give it up. Joshua was not going to force Israel

to worship God, but he encouraged all to choose to serve God. He said, "If the thought of serving Jehovah is evil to you, then make a choice today whom you will serve. Whether it is the gods that Abraham's ancestors served or the Amorite nations of this land, but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." And all the people answered, "We will not turn away from Jehovah to serve other gods."

But Joshua wanted the people to know that this was not a choice they should make lightly, or a promise that they could easily keep with their own will power. The people needed to understand that all are sinners and have broken God's law. They needed to learn that forgiveness for sins and even the power to obey God's law, come from Him. They must stop thinking that they can save themselves by the things they do or don't do, but they must trust completely in the promised Savior to be accepted by God.

Joshua and the people made a promise to serve God that day in Shechem. It was even written like a legal contract and kept next to the book of the law. He also set up a monument with the words, "This stone was a witness to the words of God that were read here, and it will be a witness against you if you break your promise to serve God." Then Joshua sent everyone home, and all Israel served the Lord for all of Joshua's life and all the days of the people who were leaders in his time.

## *Chapter 50—Tithes and Offerings*

Through Moses, God told Israel, "All the tithe of the land, the harvests of both the fields and the trees, and the growth of the herds and flocks, belongs to the Lord." [[Leviticus 27:30, 32](#)]. But tithing did not start with Israel. Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek [[Genesis 14:20](#)], and Jacob promised to give a 10<sup>th</sup> of everything he gained to the Lord [[Genesis 28:22](#)]. Giving tithes and offerings should be done with happiness and thankfulness for the blessings from God. [Acts 17:25](#) and human hands can't serve his needs--for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. [Acts 17:25 NLT](#). [Psalm 50:10](#) For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. [Psalm 50:10 NLT](#). [Haggai 2:8](#) The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. [Haggai 2:8 NLT](#). [Deuteronomy 8:18](#) Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath. [Deuteronomy 8:18 NLT](#).

The idea that the tithe is the Lord's, is similar to what the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment says about the 7<sup>th</sup> day being the Sabbath of the Lord thy God [[Exodus 20:10](#)]. So, not only should we give a 10<sup>th</sup> of what we earn to God, but we should also give a 7<sup>th</sup> of our time to Him as well.

We cannot give to Melchizedek, and we don't know how Jacob gave to the Lord. This is where the system of tithing in Israel gives us an example of how we can give a 10<sup>th</sup> to the Lord. In their case, the tithes were given to the tribe of Levi, whose job was the services and care of the sanctuary. The cost of building and operating the sanctuary and later the temple were from free will offerings, and the half shekel temple tax. Sin offerings and thank offerings flowed into the sanctuary, mostly at the annual feasts, and the poor were helped out of these.

But even before the system of tithing was put into place, the Israelites were taught that God was entitled to their first and best. The first products of all food harvested, the first-born of all animals, and even a redemption price for the first-born sons. These were collected at the sanctuary and given to the priests. This was to teach the people that they should be thankful to God who was the owner, giver and provider of all things.

The total amount of giving required of the Israelites including the tithe was 25%. Some might consider this a heavy tax, leaving them with not enough, but faithful giving and obedience to the Lord was rewarded with prosperity. [Malachi 3:11](#) Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. [Malachi 3:11 NLT](#).

At the time of their return from exile in Babylon, many Jews were having a hard time surviving off the land and protecting themselves from enemies. There was even a lack of rain which affected the produce of their fields. They were doing so poorly that the building on the temple had come to a complete halt. But this is the message God sent to them, [Haggai 1:2](#) "This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.'" <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?" <sup>5</sup> This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! <sup>6</sup> You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes! [Haggai 1:2-6 NLT](#).

But the message continued, giving them the reason for their struggles. [Haggai 1:9](#) You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses. <sup>10</sup> It's because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops. <sup>11</sup> I have called for a drought on your fields and hills--a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olive trees and all your other crops, a drought to starve you and your livestock and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get." [Haggai 1:9-11 NLT](#). [Haggai 2:16](#) When you hoped for a twenty-bushel crop, you harvested only ten. When you expected to draw fifty gallons from the winepress, you found only twenty. <sup>17</sup> I sent blight and mildew and hail to destroy everything you worked so hard to produce. Even so, you refused to return to me, says the LORD. [Haggai 2:16-17 NLT](#).

The Jews listened and responded to this message from God, and He began to bless them on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month when they laid the foundation of the temple [[Haggai 2:18-19](#)]. God had always intended the Israelites to be a light to other nations, with a system of worship and government that others would want to copy. God could have used angels to teach the world about Him, but instead, he wants those who have received His blessings to be the ones to share the knowledge of the heavenly gift.

For the Israelites, the tithe and offerings supported the priests, Levites, and the sanctuary or temple. Without a temple or Levites to support, what we give can still be used to support full time workers for the cause of God. Jesus taught that the more blessings we receive, and the more we learn about what God has done for us, the more we should give. [Luke 12:48](#) ... When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required. [Luke 12:48 NLT](#). [Matthew 10:8](#) ... Give as freely as you have

received! [Matthew 10:8 NLT](#). The further the gospel spreads in the world, the greater the need will be. Based on this reasoning, the need is greater today than it was when the Israelites supported one sanctuary, and just a few priests and Levites. God is honored when His people give freely and willingly, rather than needing worldly fund-raising methods to encourage them to give. When Moses called for donations to build the sanctuary, no great feast was given to attract donors, there were no games of chance for donors to win prizes, it was simply a call to give willingly from a grateful heart. So many donations came in that Moses had to tell the people to stop giving.

Everything belongs to God, but He asks us to manage it, and to profit from it, so that it can be used to spread the gospel. Those who are faithful in using what God has given them, will be given more. [1 Samuel 2:30](#) ... But I will honor those who honor me, and I will despise those who think lightly of me. [1 Samuel 2:30 NLT](#). [2 Corinthians 9:7](#) You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." [2 Corinthians 9:7 NLT](#). When we cheerfully bring our offerings to God, to be used for His cause, His blessings will follow. [Malachi 3:10](#) Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! [Malachi 3:10 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 51—God’s Care for the Poor*

The tithe, or a 10<sup>th</sup> of everything produced in Israel was to be given to the Levites [[Numbers 18:21](#)]. In the previous chapter it was mentioned that the Israelites were required to give more than 10%. The second tithe or 10<sup>th</sup> would partially benefit the poor and again, the Levites. This tithe should be brought 2 out of every 3 years to the sanctuary, and a portion of it would be given to the priests. The rest of it would be used for a religious feast that the Levites, strangers, fatherless, and widows would be invited to. Giving to Levites was encouraged, and this gave the people an opportunity to be around them and to receive religious teachings from them. Every 3<sup>rd</sup> year, this tithe should be used at home, in much the same way, to provide for the local needs of the Levites and the poor [[Deuteronomy 26:12](#)].

But more instruction was given through Moses for the care of the poor. Even though God would bless His people, He knew that there would always be poor among them. As long as they followed these laws, there were no people who had to beg, and no one who was left hungry. Israelite law allowed the poor to walk through another man’s field and pick and eat to satisfy their hunger at the time. At the time of harvest, gleaning was allowed by the poor. [gleaning was going through the harvested field to pick up what was left after harvest]. The law even stated that if you miss a part of the field in your harvest, you should not go back but leave it for the poor. When you shake the trees for harvest, what did not fall should be left for the poor. When you harvest your vineyards, do not go through it a second time, but leave what is left for the poor, which includes strangers, orphans, and widows [[Deuteronomy 24:19-22](#); [Leviticus 19:9-10](#)].

In addition to that, every 7<sup>th</sup> year also had benefits for the poor. This was called the sabbatical year, and the landowners were not to plant any seeds, or prune their vineyards, nor should they harvest anything. Whatever the land produced on its own could be eaten but not stored, and the poor and even animals were allowed free access to any of it [[Exodus 23:10-11](#); [Leviticus 25:5](#)].

One might ask how God expected the people to survive that year, and the next year until harvest. But if they obeyed Him, He promised that their harvest in the 6<sup>th</sup> year would be enough for 3 years, covering that year as usual, and in addition to that, the sabbatical year, and the next year until harvest [[Leviticus 25:21-22](#)].

The sabbatical year was intended to be a benefit to both the land and the people. Every 7<sup>th</sup> year, they could take a break from their work in the field, and spend more time with family, study, prayer, or hobbies. This year off would make both the people and the land more productive in the other 6 years. The sabbatical year had another benefit for the poor. On that year, all Israelite slaves were to be set free,

and they were not to be released empty-handed. They were to be given things they would need to restart their life of freedom, such as animals from the flock, and food to survive until they could start making a living [[Deuteronomy 15:13-14](#)].

God also gave instructions on how to treat people who were employees or even just a day laborer. They were not to be treated cruelly, regardless of whether they were Israelites or not. They were also to be paid each day for the work they did because they might need it to buy food for their families that evening [[Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#)].

God even gave instructions on the treatment of runaway slaves. They were not to be returned to their masters, but they were to be allowed to live in Israel and be protected by Israelite laws [[Deuteronomy 23:15-16](#)].

The sabbatical year had even more benefits for the poor. God commanded the Israelites that they should lend money to those who had fallen on hard times and never charge them interest, nor should they try to make a profit when selling food to them [[Leviticus 25:35-37](#)]. If the debt was not repaid when the sabbatical year arrived, the debt must be forgiven. Israelites were also ordered not to withhold assistance if the sabbatical year was close, because the debt would more likely not be repaid. God would consider that wickedness. The poor would always exist, but God would bless the Israelites enough to always be able to help the poor [[Deuteronomy 15:7-11](#)].

God's covenant promise with Israel if they obeyed was that they would be so prosperous that they would lend money to other nations but would never need to borrow. They would also rule other nations but not be ruled [[Deuteronomy 15:6](#)].

After 7 sabbatical years, totaling 49 years, the 50<sup>th</sup> year would be called the year of jubilee. Debts had just been forgiven and slaves freed in the sabbatical year, but in the year of jubilee, everyone could go back to the land that was originally given to their ancestors. If people were not able to manage their land, or were so in debt that they sold their land, the sale was really considered a lease until the year of jubilee when it would be returned to them or their descendants [[Leviticus 25:9-10](#)]. This law given by God ensured that families would not become poor and lose their land permanently because of mismanagement by one generation. It also ensured that children would not permanently inherit land that belonged to other families.

On the Day of Atonement in the year of jubilee, trumpets would be sounded throughout the land. If they were faithful to do all these things, the sins of the nation would be forgiven on the great Day of Atonement, and there would be celebration by the children of Israel. For the second year in a row, on the year of jubilee, there was to be no planting and harvesting. Again, whatever the land produced on its own belonged to the poor. There were some types of Israelite

slaves that might not have been freed on the sabbatical years, but in the jubilee year, all were set free.

The people were taught that the land really belonged to God, and they were to take care of the land, and use it to produce food. These laws were given because God cares about the poor, and He wanted everyone to know that they have as much right to this world as the wealthy. As long as these laws were obeyed, the poor would always have this release to look forward to.

This system was designed to limit the great evil that can result from the accumulation of wealth through land ownership. One of the forms this evil took was to keep the people who worked the land in such poverty that they were no better than slaves. In this state, they would feel that committing crime was the only way out of this hopelessness. These laws were a blessing in restraining the tendency of some to accumulate wealth at the expense of others. Those who are ambitious, with good ideas, and the ability to organize and motivate people, need workers to implement their plans. On the other hand, there are many people with less vision, who don't want to take risks, and just want to be paid to do a job. Both classes depend on and need each other.

If Israel kept these laws, God would bless the land and make it more productive. But in addition to that He would protect them from enemies, and even from dangerous animals. But if they didn't obey God's commands, they would plant and others would harvest. They would be attacked and killed by enemies and would be ruled by them. They would be constantly in fear, even hiding and running when no one was chasing them [[Leviticus 26:3-17](#)].

Many think that all should share equally in the things that God has blessed us with. But God created us to have the freedom to make choices, and to develop skills and abilities, which can result in some having more wealth than others. But He wants those who do so to remember that everything belongs to God, and He wants them to use some of their gifts and resources to help those who are poor and suffering.

The poor will always be among us, and God sympathizes with their suffering. He counts both kindness as well as cruelty and neglect toward them, as being done to Himself. If these laws for the benefit of the poor were obeyed throughout the world, it would be a much better place. There would be much less selfishness, more kindness, and there would not be such widespread poverty throughout the world. These laws, if obeyed, would have prevented many terrible things that happened as a result of the oppression of the poor by the rich. If followed, they would have slowed down the great wealth accumulated by individuals and families, but they might also have prevented many of the sins of those who had so much more than they needed and too much free time to spend it.

## *Chapter 52—The Annual Feasts*

This chapter is based on [Leviticus 23](#).

3 times each year, the Israelites were to gather at the sanctuary for worship [[Exodus 23:14-16](#)]. At first, this was at Shiloh, near the center of the land, but later it was at Jerusalem, where the temple was built. All adult men were required to attend, and sometimes women and children joined. In some cases, women and children were left behind, and in other cases homes were left completely unguarded. Enemies would have loved to attack at these times but God promised to protect their homes and land. [Psalm 34:7](#) For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. [Psalm 34:7 NLT](#). [Exodus 34:24](#) ... no one will covet and conquer your land while you appear before the LORD your God three times each year. [Exodus 34:24 NLT](#).

The 1<sup>st</sup> of these events was Passover, also called the feast of unleavened bread. It was in Abib, the 1<sup>st</sup> month on the Jewish calendar. The cold of winter was past, the latter rain was over, and it was springtime when things had already started to bloom and grow. Many groups of people could be found traveling toward Shiloh, and later Jerusalem. They were shepherds, fishermen, farmers, craftsmen, teachers, students, and even priests and Levites. The speed of travel was slow because most were traveling on foot, and the groups naturally became larger and larger as they got closer to their destination. Thankfulness for the goodness of God was awakened in the hearts of the travelers, and they would often break out into chants or song. [Psalm 122:1](#) ... I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." <sup>2</sup> And now here we are, standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem. ... <sup>4</sup> All the tribes of Israel--the LORD's people--make their pilgrimage here. They come to give thanks to the name of the LORD, as the law requires of Israel. ... <sup>6</sup> Pray for peace in Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper. [Psalm 122:1-2, 4, 6 NLT](#). [Psalm 48:1](#) ... How great is the LORD, how deserving of praise, in the city of our God, which sits on his holy mountain! <sup>2</sup> It is high and magnificent; the whole earth rejoices to see it! Mount Zion, the holy mountain, is the city of the great King! [Psalm 48:1-2 NLT](#).

When they all arrived in Jerusalem, homes were filled with friends and relatives and many stayed in tents around the city, and the surrounding countryside. At sunset on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the Passover ceremonies began, reminding everyone of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The lambs that were sacrificed pointed forward to the time when the Lamb of God would be sacrificed to deliver all people from the slavery of sin. After Jesus died, animal sacrifices were no longer needed, and the Passover was replaced by the Lord's Supper. The next day, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the feast of unleavened bread began and continued for 7

days. The first and last of the 7 days were holy and no work was done on them. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the feast, the first fruits of the barley harvest were offered by the people. The barley was beginning to ripen but could not be harvested until the first fruits were presented to the Lord.

50 Days after the first fruits of the barley harvest were given as an offering, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated. It was also known as the feast of harvest, or the feast of weeks. In thankfulness for the grain harvest, two loaves of leavened bread were given as an offering. This feast was just 1 day long, and was treated like a sabbath, with no work being done on it.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month was the Feast of Tabernacles, or ingathering. This one celebrated the harvest of the fruit and olive trees, and the vineyard. It was also a celebration of thankfulness to God for His blessings on the produce of the land. The year's harvests were all complete and the food was stored, and there was a great sense of relaxation. The Day of Atonement had been celebrated just 5 days earlier on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month. The sins of the year had been cleansed from the sanctuary, and the nation was at peace with God. Males were required to attend this feast, but whenever possible, the entire household, would join in. The poor, the stranger and the Levite were welcomed to the food and celebration of this feast. This gathering, like Passover, was to make them remember their past, when their ancestors camped in the wilderness. To accomplish this, they were to stay in temporary shelters, usually made of leafy branches [[Leviticus 23:40-43](#)].

Gathering each year for these 3 feasts would help the people to remain committed to serving God. It would also help the people from all the different tribes to feel more united as a single nation under the same God. For many who had to travel a great distance for these feasts, it was a big commitment in time. The fact that God required it, showed the importance of large gatherings to associate with like-minded people and worship God. We can learn a lesson from this today and gather in large numbers as the Israelites did for the Feast of Tabernacles, to celebrate the blessings of God to us. It is not God's plan that anyone would shut themselves out from fellowship with others.

The Feast of Tabernacles also had lessons of the future, when God would harvest the world and separate His followers from the wicked, as the farmer separates the wheat from the weeds. When the wicked are destroyed, it will be as if they never existed [[Obadiah 1:16](#)]. But the people of God from all time and all parts of the world will unite in praising Him. [Revelation 5:13](#) And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever." [Revelation 5:13 NLT](#). At that time there will be no one who is

blind, deaf, or unable to walk. The land will also be perfect, and there will be no dangerous animals [[Isaiah 35:5-9](#)]. [Isaiah 35:10](#) Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness. [Isaiah 35:10 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 53—The Earlier Judges*

This chapter is based on [Judges 6-8](#); [10](#).

After the Israelites all took possession of their assigned territories, they hardly made any effort to continue driving out the remaining Canaanite nations. Instead, since they were stronger, they made agreements with the Canaanites to pay them with money or labor, to be allowed to stay [[Judges 1:28](#)]. God would even have driven out the remaining Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites for them, with hornets if Israel remained obedient and faithful to Him. But by making agreements with them, they disobeyed God.

The children of Israel were warned over and over, to not bow down to idols and worship them. [Exodus 23:24](#) You must not worship the gods of these nations or serve them in any way or imitate their evil practices. Instead, you must utterly destroy them and smash their sacred pillars. <sup>25</sup> "You must serve only the LORD your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. [Exodus 23:24-25 NLT](#).

God didn't drive out all the Canaanites from the land on purpose, because then the wild animals would have multiplied and become a problem or danger to them. They would have had nothing to fear from the remaining Canaanites, because God would have made them afraid of Israel. He would have driven them out slowly as the Israelites grew and needed the space, as long as they remained faithful to Him [[Exodus 23:27-33](#)].

The people of Canaan had become very wicked, and God wanted to stop that evil from spreading to the rest of the world. If Israel had stayed obedient to God, He would not only have given them the entire land of Canaan. His promise to them was that they would go on growing and conquering even bigger and stronger nations than themselves. In fact, no one would have been able to stand against them, and everyone would have feared them [[Deuteronomy 11:22-25](#)]. But instead they fell to the temptations of idolatry around them, and missed the opportunity to finish clearing the Canaanites out of the land [[Numbers 33:55](#)]. They intermarried, and even sacrificed their children to devils. [Psalm 106:36](#) They worshiped their idols, which led to their downfall. <sup>37</sup> They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. <sup>38</sup> They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters. By sacrificing them to the idols of Canaan, they polluted the land with murder. <sup>39</sup> They defiled themselves by their evil deeds, and their love of idols was adultery in the LORD's sight. [Psalm 106:36-40 NLT](#).

Though the parents at the time of Joshua's death were faithful to God, they prepared the way for the fall of their children. By not destroying the idolatrous

altars and temples, they disobeyed God and left them as a temptation to their children. A side effect of their unfaithfulness to God was that they lost the superior health that had been promised if they obeyed Him. As they began to ignore the rules of health God had given them, and indulged their appetites, not only their health declined, but their physical strength, the powers of their mind, and their ability to resist temptation all declined as well. Finally, not only were they not superior to the evil nations living among them, but they were conquered by them.

The Israelites broke their side of the covenant promise with God, so He withdrew His presence from the tabernacle, and no longer protected them from the surrounding nations. Mesopotamia, Moab, the Philistines, and Hazor took their turns oppressing the Israelites, but God called on faithful people to deliver them when they cried out for help. Othniel, Shamgar, Ehud, Deborah, and Barak were their names, but each time, the same thing happened, when the next generation turned their back on God.

The Amalekites and the Midianites who had been defeated in the time of Moses, had increased in number and strength over the generations since then. Now that God was no longer protecting Israel, these two nations began to have success against them. They would overrun the land like a swarm of locusts at the time of harvest and then would ride off back to the desert with all the grain. The Israelites abandoned their farms and moved to the walled cities, and some hid in the rocks and caves in the mountains. This continued for 7 years, until there began to be a movement to repent and call upon God for help.

Gideon, son of Joash, was from the tribe of Manasseh. His brothers were brave and noble men, but all had fallen in fights against the enemy, but not before creating a reputation of valor for the sons of Joash [[Judges 8:18](#)]. Gideon was secretly threshing grain at the winepress because it was not the season for grapes, and so he hoped to avoid being caught by the invaders. Suddenly the "Angel of the Lord" appeared to him and said, "Jehovah is with you, O man of valor." Gideon answered, "If the Lord is with us, why is all this happening to us? Where are the miracles that our fathers told us about when the Lord brought them out of Egypt? Now God has abandoned us into the hands of the Midianites." The heavenly Messenger answered, "I am sending you to go and save Israel from the Midianites."

But Gideon wanted some assurance that the person speaking to him was the One that had worked for Israel in the past. So, he first asked the Messenger to wait while he prepared some food, and then quickly went and prepared some goat meat and unleavened bread. The Angel said, "Put them on the rock and pour the broth on

them." Then the Angel touched the food with His staff, and fire came out of the rock and burned up the food as a sacrifice, and the Angel disappeared.

Now Gideon's father was guilty of even leading out in the worship of Baal, because he had built a big altar in a grove on his land, and the people of the town of Ophrah came there to worship. God told Gideon to destroy the altar and build an altar to Jehovah in place of it and offer a sacrifice to the Lord on it. Gideon was afraid to do this in broad daylight, so he did it at night, with the help of 10 of his father's workers.

The next day when the men of the town came to worship, they became angry when they saw their altar destroyed. When they heard it was Gideon that had done it, they angrily went to Joash and asked him to bring Gideon out so they could kill him. But Joash asked, "Why are you trying to defend Baal? If he is a god, let him defend himself if someone destroyed his altar." How could Baal do anything for them if he cannot even protect his own altar? They saw the logic, and when Gideon sent out a call to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali for warriors, these men from his hometown were the first to join him.

But Gideon still wanted more assurance from God, so he prayed for a sign. He said, "If You really will save Israel through me, let this wool that I put out tonight be wet in the morning, but the ground be dry all around it." And it was so, but Gideon thought to himself, the wool could have absorbed the dew, making it dry around it. So, this time he asked for the wool to be dry and the ground all around it wet. The next morning it was as he asked, so Gideon was ready to follow the command of God.

The Midianites, Amalekites, and other invaders from the east gathered in the valley of Jezreel. Now 32,000 men had answered Gideon's call. But God told him, "You have too many men, because when I give you victory over the Midianites, Israel might think their own strength has saved them. So, tell the men that anyone who is afraid can go home." Anyone who was fearful or uncertain about doing the work of God would weaken rather than strengthen them. There was even a law in Israel that said as much, and in addition to that, if someone had just built a new house, or just planted a new vineyard, or just got married, they were encouraged to not go into battle [[Deuteronomy 20:5-8](#)].

Gideon was surprised, but he obeyed God and 22,000 men went home, leaving him only 10,000. But God said, "There are still too many men, so bring them down to the river and I will tell you which of those who remained will go with you." When they got to the river, the men thought they were beginning their march to attack the enemy. A few were anxious to keep moving and scooped up water in their hands to drink, but most got down on their knees and took a long relaxing drink. God told

Gideon to take the 300 men who scooped water in their hands and send the rest home. The men who remained were the ones who had the greatest faith that God would give them victory, and they were also ones who had not been guilty of worshipping idols.

Gideon and the 300 men were now on a hill where they could see the enemy camp, and there were so many, they looked like a swarm of locusts, and even the number of their camels was like the grains of sand of the seashore [[Judges 7:12](#)]. That night, God told Gideon to take Phurah his right-hand man, and sneak down into the camp of the enemy, and he would hear something encouraging. When he did so, he heard a soldier telling a dream he had. "I dreamed that a barley loaf came rolling down the hill and hit a tent and knocked it down." Then the man who was listening said, "I am afraid this is a sign that God has delivered us into the hand of Gideon, the son of Joash." Gideon was encouraged and went back to the men and said, "Let's go, for the Lord has delivered the Midianites into our hands."

God gave Gideon an attack plan that the men should be divided into 3 groups. Each man would have a trumpet, and a torch hidden in a clay pitcher. They would approach from different sides in the dark of night, and when they heard Gideon blow his horn, they should all blow their trumpets, break their pitchers, then run toward the enemy shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

The enemy was awakened from their sleep by the noise and the shouting and thought they were already under attack by a large force coming at them from all sides. In the dark they couldn't see who the enemy was, and in a panic, they fought and killed each other, as they tried to flee for their lives. They ran toward the Jordan River, hoping to reach their own land on the other side, but now the men who had been sent home, joined the 300 as they chased the Midianites down. Gideon sent messengers ahead to Ephraim, asking for help to catch the Midianite princes, Zebah and Zalmunna, who were fleeing with 15,000 men. So, the Ephraimites cut them off at the river crossing places and captured or killed the leaders. In total, more than 120,000 invaders were killed, and the Midianites were so weakened, they could not bother the Israelites anymore. After that great victory, fear spread to other potential enemies of Israel about how Israel's God fought for them.

Gideon was not from a leading family in his tribe and even called himself the least in his family. But he had courage, was not overconfident, and he was willing to obey God. Sometimes the people God calls to lead out in His work are not the obvious choices, but He chooses those who are humble and willing to do as He asks. [Proverbs 15:33](#) Fear of the LORD teaches wisdom; humility precedes honor. [Proverbs 15:33 NLT](#). It is often people who may seem to lack natural abilities as

leaders that God can use, because they will trust in Him for guidance and strength, rather than depending on their own ability. God could do much more for His people, but there are few who can be trusted with great success, without it making them self-confident. When people are confident in their own abilities, they often forget to ask God for His advice, and His power.

Gideon's attack plan was so simple, yet because he was obeying God's command, it came with God's power. The simplest plans carried out with faith, in obedience to God, will always be successful. That is also how Joshua succeeded in his battles with the Canaanites. It was God's desire that His miracles for Israel would give them more faith and trust in Him, and lead to them go to Him first for help with every emergency. He is just as willing to do great things for His people today, if they ask for His help in carrying out His will. [Ephesians 3:20](#) Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. [Ephesians 3:20 NLT](#).

When Gideon returned from his successful battle against the Midianites, he was greeted by men from the tribe of Ephraim who were angry with him. The original call for men went out to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, but not Ephraim. At the time they doubted that Gideon would succeed so the fact that he didn't invite them personally was an excuse for them to stay home. Now that he had succeeded, they were jealous of the glory they thought he would receive, so they angrily accused him of leaving them out. This attitude showed that they were unworthy to be used as instruments by God in the delivery of Israel.

Showing his humility and tact, Gideon answered them by saying, "What I did was nothing compared to your capture and killing of the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb." If Gideon had answered back in anger, the result could easily have been civil war, but instead the Ephraimites were satisfied and went home.

In gratefulness for the part he played in their deliverance, the Israelites asked Gideon to be their king. But he knew that God was their king, and to make a man king over Israel would be a rejection of their true King. His answer to this request was, "I will not rule over Israel, nor will my descendants, because God is your King."

But Gideon did make a mistake that would have terrible consequences for his own family, and for Israel, later. Since God had told Gideon to offer a sacrifice to Him at the beginning, he figured he had a special calling from God to be a priest, so he thought he should look like a priest. Without God's approval, he used his share of the spoils taken from the Midianites and had an ephod and a breastplate made for himself like the ones worn by the high priest. This led to worship that was not according to God's commands, and some took it further and began to worship

idols. After Gideon's death many people, including his family became unfaithful to God, at least in part because of what he did.

Most people do not realize how far their words and actions can reach. Mistakes made by parents can have bad consequences in their children, and in turn even worse results in the next generation, and people in positions of power will affect even more lives. In fact, everyone is living with the consequences of actions taken by people who died long ago.

After Gideon died, the children of Israel gave up worshipping God, and didn't even protect his children. Israel accepted Abimelech as king, who was a son of Gideon but not of his wives. To ensure his power, the evil Abimelech killed all but one of the 70 sons of Gideon. After the short bloody reign of Abimelech, there were some good judges who slowed down the spread of idolatry, but eventually most of Israel had fallen to worshipping the idols of the heathens living near them. In this condition, without God's protection, Israel was easily invaded again, this time by the Ammonites from the east, and the Philistines from the south. Then the Israelites cried out to God for help, but they were only looking for help against the invaders without true repentance.

The Lord answered through a prophet: "I delivered you from the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites, and Philistines. When the Zidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites invaded and you cried out for help, I also delivered you from them. And yet, you have still turned away from Me and worshipped other gods, so go and ask them for deliverance. I will not save you anymore." In the great and final judgment, many will hear the same words. They will be people who have rejected the love, mercy, and grace of God. They followed the path of worldly pleasure, intending at some time to return to God, but the attractions of the world, indulgence of appetite, desire for the approval of others, and accumulation of wealth, hardened their heart and numbed their conscience. They didn't hear the Holy Spirit calling to them, and the things of the world were more important to them, and in the end, they reaped the harvest of what they planted.

So, the Israelites truly humbled themselves and put away the false gods and worshipped Jehovah. Then God in His infinite mercy, listened to their cries for help and began to work for them. Jephthah, a man from Gilead, was the instrument of God, and he fought against the Ammonites and broke their power over Israel.

After a series of judges, Israel again turned away from God. They began to mingle with the Philistines to the south, enjoying their sinful pleasures, worshipping their gods, and acting as if they were friends. But then the Philistines turned on them and oppressed them and worked to destroy them. That is how it is when Christians today allow themselves to be influenced by the ungodly of the world. They will

spend time with them, and try to be like them, and think they are friends, but in the end, they will realize that those people are their most dangerous enemies. God has told us that we should not be surprised if the world hates His people. [1 John 3:13](#) So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. [1 John 3:13 NLT](#). [John 15:18](#) "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. [John 15:18 NLT](#). Satan uses the ungodly to lure God's people into sin, and when they are separated from God's protection, he will turn his people against them and try to destroy them.

## *Chapter 54—Samson*

This chapter is based on [Judges 13-16](#).

The worship of idols had become so common in Israel that it seemed everyone had forsaken God. Because of this unfaithfulness, Israel was completely under the control of the Philistines. But there were a few who were still faithful to God and though it seemed like there was no response, they kept praying for deliverance. It was to one of these families in the town of Zorah from the tribe of Dan, that the Angel of Jehovah appeared with the promise of a child who would begin to deliver Israel. The Angel appeared as a Man to the wife of Manoah and gave this news and at the same time told her to drink nothing made from grapes, and to eat no unclean meat. He also said that the child should be dedicated to God as a Nazirite his entire life, and so he should also follow the same rules and should never cut his hair. [The Nazirite vow was usually made by adults for a limited time. [[Numbers 6](#)]].

When Manoah's wife told him what happened, he prayed that the man would come back so that he could hear for himself what they should do. But instead, the man appeared to his wife again, so she went and called her husband to meet the Him. Then Manoah asked, "Are you the man that talked to my wife?" The man said, "I am." Then Manoah asked, how should we raise the child and what will he do? The man said, just do what I already told the woman, and then repeated His instructions.

This story should teach us that what a mother eats, drinks, or does during pregnancy can affect the baby. Both parents pass on some of their own characteristics to their children, and during pregnancy, addiction to alcohol and tobacco can also be passed directly to the child. By genetics, but also by example, bad habits, unholy desires, and even disease can be passed from parent to child and can get worse from one generation to the next. Parents can even be responsible in some cases for children born deaf, blind, or physically or mentally deformed.

At the time they were given, the Jewish laws about clean and unclean meats might not have been thought of as having direct physical impact. But these laws have had health benefits for thousands of years for Jewish people who kept them. The word "unclean" when describing meat often says something about the lifestyle or diet of that animal, which could be expected to affect its meat. The principles from the instructions to Manoah and his wife apply to us today, in that by being healthy, we can better serve God. Few today realize the impact that a healthy diet has not only in this world, but on choices that may affect where they end up for eternity. The appetite should always be under the control of the mind and not the other way around.

The promise was fulfilled when a son was born to Manoah and his wife, and they named him Samson. When they realized his gift of super strength, they taught him that it was a gift from God, on condition of his keeping of the Nazarite vow. Though he kept his hair uncut, he was disobedient to his parents and God by becoming friends with the Philistines. As an adult, he fell in love with a Philistine woman from the town of Timnath and told his parent to arrange for him to marry her. They of course tried to get him to change his mind, but Samson stubbornly refused and said, "She pleases me well."

Instead of trying to discover God's will for how he should begin to carry out his mission of saving his people, Samson was only concerned with pleasing himself. In fact, worse, he chose to associate with the enemies of Israel and allowed himself to be influenced by them. It is one of Satan's favorite tools against God's people, to get them to be close friends with those who do not share their beliefs and principles. He can even gain greater power over them if he can get them to fall in love and get married. Whoever voluntarily does this will usually feel the need to compromise principles to get along with their marriage partner. But God warned us against such friendships. [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? [2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NLT](#).

During the wedding, Samson's wife was pressured into betraying him, causing him to get angry and walk out on her. When he cooled down and went back for her, he discovered that her father had given her to the best man at his wedding. Samson lost his temper on learning this and immediately went out and burned the fields of the Philistines, which prompted them to murder his wife. This made Samson even more angry, and he attacked the Philistines, and killed many of them, and then he went to the rock of Etam in the land of the tribe of Judah.

The Philistines then sent their army to capture and bring Samson back for punishment. They threatened the people of Judah, which scared them into agreeing to turn Samson over. Scared of Samson themselves, Judah sent 3000 of their own men to arrest Samson. Before turning himself over to them, Samson made them promise that they would not try to kill him themselves, and they agreed. Then they tied him up with two new ropes and delivered him to the Philistines. But even as they were celebrating their capture of Samson, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he broke free of the new ropes as easily as if they had been burned flax stalks. Then having no weapon, he picked up the jawbone of a donkey, and killed 1000 armed men, causing the rest to flee in terror. If Israel had seen the power of God in Samson's victory, they could have worked together with him to break the power of the Philistines over them, but they were afraid. As was the case when the men of

Judah delivered Samson to the Philistines, even when God raised up a deliverer for them, they would often desert him and unite with their enemies.

After this, the Israelites asked Samson to be their judge, and he did so for 20 years. But Samson had not learned his lesson after his attempted marriage to a Philistine woman. Trusting in his great strength, he dared to go to the town of Gaza, to a prostitute, even though he knew the Philistines hated him. When he was inside the city, the Philistines closed and locked the city gates, hoping to capture him in the morning. But perhaps Samson's conscience was bothering him, as he remembered his Nazirite vow, and he got up at midnight to leave. God, in His mercy had not abandoned Samson, and gave him the power needed for his escape, and he broke down the gate, and then picked it up together with the gateposts, and bars and carried them up to the top of a hill and left them there.

Unfortunately, Samson continued to give into the temptations of finding pleasure with Philistine women. He found a woman named Delilah in the valley of Sorek, which was not far from Zorah, that he fell in love with. Most likely Samson had also broken his vow to not drink anything made from grapes, as the valley of Sorek was well known for its vineyards. Of course, the Philistines were always keeping track of the movements of their greatest enemy and began to plan how they would use Delilah to capture Samson. When he was not there, they sent leaders from all the different parts of Philistia, with promises of great rewards, to get Delilah to discover the secret of Samson's great strength.

As Samson would lie on the bed with her, she would find ways to ask him how he was so strong. He would make up some ridiculous answers and each time it was tested, when the Philistines tried and failed to overpower him. It could not have been clearer that she was helping the Philistines to try to capture him, but he kept coming back. Finally, he got so tired of her nagging, that he told her about his Nazirite vows, and told her that if his hair was cut, he would become weak like a normal man. She sent for the Philistines again, and while he was sleeping, they cut his hair off. Then as she had done 3 times before, she woke him up by saying, "The Philistines are here." As he had done each time before, Samson assumed he would just overpower them, and they would scatter, but he quickly realized that Jehovah was not with him, and neither was his strength. The Philistines arrested him and removed both of his eyes, then secured him with chains, and made him do hard labor in prison.

Samson had violated many of the parts of the Nazirite vow, but God had not immediately stripped him of his strength. But when he persisted in sin and violation of his vow to the point where he carelessly gave away his last secret, God left him. The hair was not the source of his strength, it was only a symbol of his

loyalty to God, and when that was gone, so was his power. Samson had fallen from his high position of judge, and champion of Israel, to a weak, blind, prisoner, that was even taunted and made fun of. The Philistines credited their victory over Samson to their gods and believed them stronger than the God of Israel. In this condition, Samson realized his helplessness, and need of God, and repented.

The Philistines decided to have a great celebration to Dagon, the fish god, and their temple was filled with people, including rulers from all parts of their nation. There were sacrifices to their god, as well as feasting, and music. Finally, the ultimate symbol of Dagon's power was brought in, the defeated Samson, blind and in chains. When Samson realized where he was, an idea came to him, so he prayed to God and asked for his great strength one last time, then in faith, he wrapped his arms around the central pillars of the temple and pulled them down. In this final act of his life, he killed more of the enemies of Israel, than he did in all his battles with them.

Samson's family came and dug through the rubble, to retrieve his body, and they buried him next to his father near Zorah and Eshtaol. Through his death, Samson finally accomplished his mission, to deliver his people from the Philistines. But if he had been obedient and faithful to God, this victory could have been achieved with him being a respected judge, leading the Israelites back to God. With the miraculous power of God, Samson was undoubtedly the strongest man who ever lived, but he was one of the weakest in self-control and doing what was right. Samson had been taught, and given good conditions for his success, but when he instead chose to spend his time with idolators and sinners, he followed in their wickedness. People that God chooses for special work, will be attacked by the strongest temptations of Satan, but God has promised strength to overcome. However, if people willingly surround themselves with sin and temptation all the time, eventually they will fall.

## *Chapter 55—The Child Samuel*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:11](#).

Elkanah was a Levite, who lived among the Ephraimites, and he was faithful and obedient to God, and was well respected and wealthy. He had a wife named Hannah, who was a gentle woman, who also had great faith in God. But since she was childless, Elkanah took another wife named Peninnah, who did give birth to sons and daughters. This did not lead to happiness because, though she had children, Peninnah was jealous of Hannah's position as first wife, and was mean to her, but Hannah took it without complaint.

Elkanah was obedient to the laws of God and took his family to the required feasts at the tabernacle in Shiloh, even when he was not required to serve. It was the custom of Elkanah, when he handed out the portions of food, to give a double portion to Hannah, and a single portion to everyone else. This made Peninnah jealous, and she took it out on Hannah, even at the special feast occasions. Finally, Hannah couldn't take it anymore, she burst into tears and left the table. Elkanah went to comfort her and asked what was bothering her, and she told him it was because she had no son, and he responded by saying, "Am I not better to you than 10 sons?"

Clearly her husband did not understand, so Hannah went to the sanctuary to pour out her heart to God. At this time, Hannah made a promise to God, that if He gave her a son, she would dedicate him to God in a special way from birth, and he would serve God all the days of his life. As she prayed silently, she was crying, and her lips were moving, but no words could be heard. When Eli, the high priest saw this, he assumed she was drunk and went to reprove her. But Hannah, responded respectfully, "No, my lord, I have drunk neither wine nor anything with alcohol, but I have been pouring out my heart to God in sadness." Then Eli said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel give you what you asked of Him."

God did give Hannah what she asked for, when she gave birth to a son she called Samuel, which means "asked of God." Hannah enjoyed the short time with her son, training him until he was old enough to be separated from her, then she kept her promise to God and brought him to the sanctuary. Hannah said to Eli, "This is the child I prayed for, and since the Lord gave me what I asked for, now I am lending him to the Lord for as long as he lives." Eli had not been a good father to his sons, because he had usually let them have whatever they wanted. He was humbled and even reproved by the faith and sacrifice of Hannah.

The Spirit of God came upon Hannah as she prayed a prayer of rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving. Her prayer also said to not be proud, because God will judge

your actions, and He can also reverse fortunes of anyone. The end of her prayer were prophecies of king David, and then the Messiah, the anointed of the Lord [[1 Samuel 2:1-10](#)].

From the earliest time that he could understand, Hannah had taught Samuel to love, obey and reverence God. He was taught that he had been dedicated to and belonged to God. She made use of object lessons that would often cause him to think about his Creator. Then Hannah returned home to Ramah, leaving Samuel with Eli, the high priest. But Hannah never stopped thinking about her son and prayed for him daily. And every year when she went with her husband to Shiloh to worship God, she brought a new robe that she made with her own hands. What she wanted most for her son was that he would first honor God, then be a blessing to his people.

The job of caring for children when they are helpless, and then slowly training, and teaching them may seem very unimportant. But the character that a child develops starting at a very young age will have a great impact on the choices they make as an adult. A single person can have a great impact on the world, for good or for evil, so, training them and forming their character is a tremendous responsibility, and a very important and honorable job, if done well. If the child is not taught, restrained, and disciplined, sinful nature will usually take over, and the natural tendency is toward evil. If mothers would pray to God for wisdom to train their children, they would receive it.

As Samuel grew, God was pleased with him, and men were impressed. Even though Samuel grew up at the tabernacle, learning to serve God, he was not free of bad influences. The sons of Eli were wicked men, who disobeyed God, and had no respect for their father. Samuel avoided them as much as possible and had no desire to join them in their evil activities. His purpose and goal was to serve God and to do what God wanted him to do. God is happy when children and young people choose as Samuel did. Samuel was kind, obedient, and respectful, and Eli enjoyed his company, and had a warm loving fatherly relationship with him.

Though Samuel was a Levite, he would normally not have been allowed to serve in the tabernacle until he was 25 years old. But his was a special case, and gradually, beginning with the smallest, humblest tasks, as he cheerfully did a good job, he was given more and more responsibility. As a young child, Samuel was even allowed to wear a linen ephod, which was normally only worn by priests. Samuel believed he was doing the work of God, and he loved doing it. As he grew, he became a co-worker with God. Children should be taught from a young age, as Samuel was, that everything they do is for the Lord. Thinking this way would make each task seem more important, and when small and seemingly unimportant

jobs are done well, it will lead to success in this life and the life to come. God did no less when He hung the world in space but also gave attention to detail in the smallest flower He made. We should try to be perfect in the little things we do, even as our heavenly Father is perfect in what He does. Each little task done well is building our character, just like bricks perfectly laid become a beautiful building. Children today can be like Samuel was when he was young, and if they continue performing each task as if they were doing it for the Lord, God will be able to use them to make the world a better place.

## *Chapter 56—Eli and His Sons*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 2:12-36](#).

Eli was the high priest because of his ancestry but somehow had also been appointed as judge over all of Israel. They were both positions that came with a lot of power and respect, but though he was expected to guide and influence the nation, he was not even able to do that for his own family. Eli did not like conflict, so he rarely corrected his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, leaving them to develop bad characters. It is not that he didn't know his sons were doing wrong, but he did not want to make them angry with, punishment, or discipline. God said this of Abraham, [Genesis 18:19](#) I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised." [Genesis 18:19 NLT](#).

Because of the position of his family as priests, the result of Eli's failure was even worse, when he allowed his sons to serve as priests. His wicked sons ignored the rules that God had given and did whatever they wanted. As a result, the object lessons God had intended for the sacrifices were destroyed. There were detailed procedures that allowed the priest to have a portion of the sacrifice, but Eli's sons took whatever portion they wanted and if the worshipper objected, they used violence. Hophni and Phinehas also did other evil and degrading things, like what went on at idolatrous temples. Many people became angry with the evil things they were doing and stopped coming to the sanctuary for worship. When people complained to Eli about the wicked things his sons did, he was unable to get them to change, and he was too weak to remove them from being priests.

One day a prophet came to Eli and gave him a message from God, "Your ancestors were chosen to serve me as priests from the start, and part of their inheritance was to receive the meat of the sacrifices. Why do you honor your sons above Me by letting them take by force whatever they want, destroying the meaning of the sacrifices for the people. Because of this, I will raise up someone to be priest in your place, who is faithful to Me, and will follow My commands."

If Eli had fairly judged his wicked sons, they would not only have been removed as priests, but they would have been sentenced to death. But when he failed to act, God held him responsible for their sins. He was more worried about how it might look for him to acknowledge their sins and punish them, than about the damage they did to the reputation of God. In his appointed position as high priest and judge, Eli was responsible for teaching Israel to obey God, but he couldn't even do that for his own sons. People in positions of leadership who are not willing to speak out against evil in the church will be responsible for the bad things that result

from it. Parents who might have stopped evil in their children, but didn't, can be held responsible as if they did the evil deeds themselves.

Many parents today make the same mistake that Eli did when raising their children. They take the advice of so-called experts over what is written in God's word. They think punishment is wrong, and never correct their children, thinking they will eventually grow out of their bad habits. But when they lose all respect for their parents, then they care nothing for the authority of man, and even God. Those character traits become a lifelong curse to them, and those that must interact with them, and then are often passed on to their children.

The promise of priesthood given to the family of Aaron was conditional on their faithfulness to God and obedience to His laws. Eli and his sons had proven themselves completely unworthy of that promise, and that branch of the family tree would be cut off. People today who hold positions where they do things in the name of Christ, would do well to learn from the example of Eli and his sons. If they use their position to enrich themselves, or to satisfy their sensual desires, they are tools of Satan, as Hophni and Phinehas were. Not only are they doing bad things, but they give God and religion a bad reputation.

In Eli's feeble attempt to reprove his sons, he told them, "If a person sins against another person, a judge can punish them and order them, if possible, to make it right. But if someone continually damages the reputation of God by their sin, who will be able to intercede for them?" Eli was telling his sons that their actions and behavior did so much damage to the reputation and worship of God that he could not shield them from the punishment that they justly deserved. The worst kind of sin is that which makes God look bad to the rest of the world.

## *Chapter 57—The Ark Taken by the Philistines*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 3-7](#).

Messages from God were scarce in those days, and no one was receiving visions. Eli was to receive one more direct message from God, but because of his sins, and those of his sons God could not speak directly to him. One evening, as Samuel was lying in his bed, he heard a voice calling his name. So, he went to Eli to see what he wanted, but Eli said, "I didn't call for you, go back to bed." This happened 3 times and Eli decided it must be God Who was speaking to Samuel, so he told him what to say if the voice called again. When Samuel heard the call again, he said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

Then God told Samuel, "I am going to do something that will shock all Israel. I am going to do what I threatened to Eli and his sons because he did nothing after the first warning. From this time forward, the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven through sacrifice or offerings." This was the first time God spoke to Samuel, and it was the beginning of his prophetic ministry.

In the morning Samuel was afraid to give such a terrible message to Eli, so he kept quiet and tried to avoid him. Finally, Eli called Samuel and asked him what the Lord had told him, and he added, "God will punish you if you don't tell me everything." Eli gracefully accepted the message, but still he did nothing to stop his sons. Even then, the judgment of God did not happen right away.

A day came when Israel and the Philistines fought each other in battle, and after about 4000 men had been killed, the Israelites began to lose confidence. Ignoring the sins of the nation, the leaders asked each other why God was allowing them to lose to the Philistines. Without consulting God, they decided to bring the ark into battle, hoping it would somehow give them victory. When Hophni and Phinehas arrived with the ark, the Israelites were inspired with new confidence and let out a great shout. The Philistines had heard of the miracles performed by Jehovah in the past, and when they saw the ark, they believed the god of the Israelites was on the battlefield. They thought of the ark as the god that had brought the plagues on the Egyptians and wondered how they would be able to fight against that. The Philistines were afraid, but they said to each other, "Be strong and fight like men, so we don't end up becoming the slaves of the Israelites." They were already winning, and this gave the Philistines more reason to fight hard, which resulted in a great defeat for Israel, who lost the ark and 30,000 men, including Hophni and Phinehas.

The ark was the most holy object in the sanctuary, and the mercy seat above the ark is where the glory of God had appeared in past times. But the glory that had

appeared over the mercy seat was a demonstration of His power and presence and was not produced by the ark itself. The Israelites were surprised the ark had not brought them victory, and there was great mourning over the loss of it. They had begun to think of the ark itself as possessing power and were guilty of treating it like an idol. But when they neglected God's law that was contained in the ark, it was nothing more than a box to them. Their sins had separated them from God, and He would not give them victory until they repented.

Eli was old and blind at the time, and knowing the ark had been taken into battle, nervously waited for news. Finally, a messenger came announcing, "Israel has suffered a great defeat, and many people have been killed, including your two sons, and the ark of God has been taken." Eli had been warned that his sons would both die on the same day, so he had been expecting that, but news of the ark was more than he could bear. When he fell back, his neck broke, and he died. At the same time, the wife of Phinehas was having difficulty in giving birth, and with her dying breath, she named her son Ichabod, which meant "inglorious," and added, "The glory has left Israel, because the ark of God has been taken."

The Philistines had been used by God to punish the Israelites, but they were not innocent. Now God would use the ark to glorify His own name, and to punish them. The Philistines took the ark to Ashdod and put it in the temple of their god Dagon. With the ark in their possession, they had assumed that the power of Israel's God would be theirs, and when combined with Dagon, would make them unbeatable. But the next day, their priests found Dagon broken and on laying its face before the ark. They repaired their idol, but the next day it was broken down, laying on the ground before the ark again. This time, the upper part of the idol that had the form of a human was all broken up but the lower part that was like a fish remained in one piece. The Philistines were terrified and removed the ark from the temple of their god. But soon the people of Ashdod began getting sick and dying, and their rulers began to remember the legend of the plagues that had fallen on Egypt. So, they sent the ark to Gath, and the people there began to get sick and die. Then it was moved to Ekron next, but the people there were terrified, and said, "They brought the ark of God here to kill us." They begged for protection from their gods, but the plague continued. Soon a plague of mice was added, and everything was getting destroyed, including food in storage.

This continued for 7 months, and instead of getting its power, the ark was destroying them, and they were anxious to get rid of it. Their priests said the ark must be returned but an offering should be sent with it so that they plagues would be lifted. When asking their god for healing, it was the customary to make an offering of gold or silver in the shape of the problem. So, in this case they made 5 gold tumors like the ones that were killing their people. They also made 5 gold

mice and sent them as an offering together with the ark to Israel. The number 5 was for the number of rulers within their kingdom. Not everyone was convinced that the plagues were directly caused by the ark, so as a test, they put the ark with their offerings on a new cart and attached it to two cows that had just given birth. They said, if the cows ignore their calves, and walk straight to the nearest Israelite town, then we will know that the plagues were caused by their God. So, the 5 Philistine rulers themselves followed the cows from a distance to see where they would go. When the cows went straight to Beth-Shemesh, the nearest Israelite town, they had their answer, and in addition to that the plagues stopped, so the Philistines were convinced that it was the God of Israel that had punished them.

The people of the town were harvesting their wheat at the time, and when they saw the ark, they were very happy, and the good news quickly spread. The cows walked right into a field belonging to a man named Joshua and stopped. People of Beth-Shemesh, and even some surrounding towns began to gather to see if the news was really true. The ark was moved from the cart to a rock, and the cart was used as firewood and the cows were sacrificed as offerings to God. As the crowd grew, some people began to get curious and went close to examine the ark. Finally, some dared to open the ark, and God punished 70 men with instant death. The people should have known that only Levites were allowed to touch the ark, and once it was set up in the sanctuary, no one even saw the ark except the high priest once a year. Even the Philistines didn't dare to open it.

Now, seeing the ark as a possible curse, the men of Beth-Shemesh asked their neighbors from Kirjath-Jearim if they wanted it. They were happy to take it, so the ark was reverently moved to the house of a Levite named Abinadab, and his son was given the responsibility of taking care of it where it would remain for many years.

After the death of Eli, it slowly became apparent to Israel that Samuel was called by to God to be a prophet. Finally, the entire nation from Dan to Beersheba accepted him as a prophet, and everything he said was treated as words from God. As a nation, the Israelites were still worshipping idols, so they also remained under the power of the Philistines. Samuel started traveling from town to town throughout the nation, trying to turn the hearts of the people back to God. The people had been suffering under the oppression of the Philistines for 20 years, and they were tired of it. Samuel suggested to them that they should get rid of their idols and return to worshipping the Lord only. Repentance is the first step in coming to God. Each person must repent on their own, because no one can do this for someone else. We should humble ourselves and get rid of our idols, then the Lord can then begin to do the things that He wants for us. Finally, a large gathering

was called for at Mizpeh, and the people humbled themselves, and confessed their sins, and asked Samuel to take up the role of judge.

Mistaking this gathering as a war council, the Philistines assembled themselves for battle. When the people realized the Philistines were coming to attack, they begged Samuel to ask God to save them. As Samuel was in the act of sacrificing a lamb as a burnt offering, the Philistines arrived. Suddenly, a terrible storm attacked the Philistines, killing many of them. As the Israelites watched, they realized that God had accepted their repentance and had fought for them as He had for their ancestors long ago. The Israelites were not prepared for battle, but they picked up the weapons of the dead Philistines, and chased the survivors, who were fleeing for their lives. This was the same battlefield where they had been defeated 20 years before and had lost the ark. At this time, the Philistines were so afraid, that they deserted the forts they had taken from Israel, and did not threaten them again for the rest of the time that Samuel was judge. To remind Israel of this great deliverance, a stone memorial was set up, that Samuel named Ebenezer, meaning "the stone of help."

## *Chapter 58—The Schools of the Prophets*

Education in Israel was primarily learning and studying the writings of Moses, which were considered the laws of the nation, and also God's law. But these laws were not only about worship, and if kept, would also benefit them physically and mentally. Parents were to teach these laws to their children, and to tell them about the miracles God had performed for their ancestors. They also taught that the greatness and power of God could be seen in nature that was created by Him. Teaching their children was a great responsibility and could have a very big influence on the next generation's relationship to God.

Some of the greatest influencers in the Bible, Moses, Samuel, and Jesus, were trained from a very young age by godly mothers. David and Daniel showed signs of faithfulness to God from a young age, and of Timothy it was said that from the time he was a child, he learned the scriptures from his mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois [[2 Timothy 1:5](#); [3:15](#)].

Samuel saw the need to provide the next step in education, to develop in those who had the gift and desire, to become future spiritual leaders and teachers in Israel. It was thought that this could help the nation from falling away from God and doing evil. This went beyond just being an education, because it included teaching the spiritual gifts of prophecy, and communication with God. Those who graduated from these schools were respected for their knowledge and also for their faithfulness to God. Samuel started two of these schools, one in his hometown of Ramah, and the other in Kirjath-Jearim, where the ark was.

Students at these schools learned useful life skills as they worked together to grow their own food and provide dormitories for themselves to live in. It was normal in Israel for young people to learn some kind of useful skill that would allow them to provide for their future family. It was even common for religious teachers to learn some kind of useful manual labor. The apostle Paul was an example of this when he supported himself by making tents.

The subjects that were taught and studied at these schools were all the writings of Moses, which included the law of God, the laws written by Moses, and history, and in addition to that sacred music and poetry. Unlike schools of religion today, the focus of the schools of the prophets at that time was to learn what God expects from us. A lot could be learned from the history of the world and God's interaction with human beings, beginning with creation. The plan of salvation was a central theme of study, focused on how God would sacrifice Himself as a lamb, to put an end to sin in the world. The students were also taught about prayer, and faith, and how to recognize and obey the teachings of the Holy Spirit, which included

learning new truths from old writings. They also learned how the Spirit could reveal new truths in the form of prophecy and song.

Music is a powerful influence, and the students were taught how to use it to show reverence and thankfulness to God, and by doing so to help them to have pure and uplifting thoughts. There are choirs of angels in heaven, which even shows the importance of music in the sinless environment of heaven. Music is as much a part of worship as prayer. But the same power that music has to move us to uplift God, it can have in the opposite direction. It can be used as a tool by Satan to turn the mind to worldly and sinful things.

How different are the schools today that are called institutions of higher learning. They teach the customs of the world, but even worse, some of the teachers are evil people teaching the students what God would call crime and sinfulness. People graduate from these schools with a terrible lack of discipline, and a great ignorance of God's word. Even classes that are supposed to be about religion and morality are shallow and based on feelings and emotions. It is rare to find classes that teach about the holiness of God, His law, His justice and His mercy, as well as the terrible effects of sin. Schools today could learn from those schools of the prophets, after all, wouldn't the God who made our minds and bodies, have the best plan to educate us?

In the beginning, God made man in his image, but sin has corrupted those gifts and abilities. The goal of education should be to restore man as much as possible back to the image of God. Parents and teachers should work together with God to accomplish this. God is love, and sacrificed Himself for us, and wants to restore us to His image. If we are like God, we will want to lift our fellow human beings toward the image of God as well. If we do this, we will find that it is the most rewarding and satisfying experience. [Proverbs 9:10](#) Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. [Proverbs 9:10 NLT](#). [Psalm 119:72](#) Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver. [Psalm 119:72 NLT](#). [Psalm 119:104](#) Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. [Psalm 119:104 NLT](#).

The human mind is mostly programmed by what we see and hear. What we watch and listen to the most, we will naturally think about a lot, and this will transform our mind, body, and actions. If a person only thinks about small and unimportant things, their mind will become weak. But if they think about and try to solve big problems, the power of the mind will grow.

From the standpoint of education, the Bible is the best textbook. God is its source, and He has preserved it through the ages of history. It provides answers about the origin of our world, and the beginning of life. It teaches that we were made perfect,

in the image of God, and why we now find ourselves in a world full of evil. It teaches that there is a battle between good and evil forces greater than us, and in the end, that good will win and evil will be destroyed. It provides stories of great men, their victories and their defeats. It brings the human mind into communication with the infinite mind of God. Study of the Bible cannot help but strengthen the powers of the mind.

The Bible provides the best rules, recommendations, and guidelines for a peaceful, prosperous and happy society. It contains information and teachings that can benefit any occupation of life. Even if everyone doesn't study the Bible, those who do can bring honor to God, and be of great benefit to the world.

The study of science is nothing more than trying to understand things created by God. True science will reveal the wisdom and the power of God through what He made. When science is understood correctly, it will be consistent with the word of God. Teachers should follow the example of Jesus, who often used examples from nature to teach a spiritual truth. Then whenever those who received these teachings saw those things in nature, they would remember the things Jesus taught. The beauty in the smallest details of nature, created for us, should teach us about the great love of God for us.

There are many today who teach that religion is for the weak minded, and that it does not really contribute to mental health and happiness. But the Bible says otherwise, [Proverbs 19:23](#) Fear of the LORD leads to life, bringing security and protection from harm. [Proverbs 19:23 NLT](#). [Psalm 34:12](#) Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? <sup>13</sup> Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies! <sup>14</sup> Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. [Psalm 34:12-14 NLT](#). [Proverbs 4:22](#) for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. [Proverbs 4:22 NLT](#).

Unfortunately, there are many false religions, but true religion brings people physically, mentally, and morally into harmony with the laws of God. It teaches self-control and moderation, it lifts the mind to purer thoughts, and it helps us make better decisions. A better understanding of the love of God, and His plans for us can be helpful to those who tend to worry. Keeping the laws of God can even lead to longer life, and people only hurt themselves when they disobey them.

Students must learn that a well-balanced character requires the development of both the mind and body. As in the schools of the prophets, students today should do some kind of manual labor or exercise, together with their studies. Physical labor can occupy a person's mind which might otherwise think of bad things to do with free time. True education is a balanced development of both mind and body, which will bring us into closer connection with our Creator.

Young people should be taught that their purpose in life should be to honor God, and to make life better for their fellow human beings. Let them learn that their true destiny is to become sons and daughters of God. They should learn to hate sin, not just to avoid punishment, but because it degrades the mind and body that God has given them. The natural desire that young people have to do something important when they are grown should not be suppressed, but they should be taught that it is achieved by the balanced development of spiritual, mental, and physical abilities. They should be taught to aim high for their goals in life, much higher than simply making themselves rich and comfortable. In the end, all their education and development in this life is just the first step in their continuing growth in the life to come. By developing our mind and body in the way our Creator intended, we can get a small taste, even in this sinful world, of the joy we will ultimately have in heaven. But the true happiness that we will experience when we are finally restored to the image of God, will be better than anything we could ever imagine.

## *Chapter 59—The First King of Israel*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 8-12](#).

God was supposed to be the ultimate authority in the nation of Israel. Moses, the 70 elders, and judges, were simply teachers and enforcers of His law. God knew that Israel would want a king, but if and when they got a king, he was to be second in command to their true King, who was God. When they first entered Canaan, Joshua was a faithful leader, and they still remembered the great miracles of God. But gradually, they became like the surrounding nations and didn't really appreciate being different. Differences between tribes led to arguments, which weakened them as well, leaving them vulnerable to attack. Israel saw these conquering nations being led by kings and thought that is what they needed to unite the nation.

With Samuel as judge, prophet, and priest, there was justice, unity and security that had not been seen since the days of Joshua. But now that Samuel was old, he began to share some of the judging responsibility with his sons. Sadly, Samuel had not learned the lessons on training his sons from Eli's failure, and his sons were guilty of accepting bribes to influence their judgment. It was obvious to everyone except Samuel, and had he known he would have removed them from power. But the elders of Israel now used that as a reason when they went to Samuel and asked for a king, but what they really wanted was to be like the nations around them. They admitted that they had no complaint against him, but Samuel took it personally and felt they were rejecting him.

When Samuel went to pray about it, the Lord said, "Give them what they want, and don't think they have rejected you. It is Me they have rejected from reigning over them, even after all the things I did for them since the time I brought them out of Egypt." Any who reject His faithful messengers are rejecting God Himself.

If Israel had honored God as their King, and kept His laws, the nations around them would have said, [Deuteronomy 4:6](#) ... 'How wise and prudent are the people of this great nation!' [Deuteronomy 4:6 NLT](#). But since they didn't honor God, and instead rejected Him as their King, they never truly became the great nation they could have been. God has a great plan for us, but when we don't ask what it is, or we reject the advice given by His messengers, He doesn't stop us from doing what we want. When things turn out bad, and suffering follows, some will realize their mistake and repent. God always wants the best for us, and when we go against His will, the result will always be worse than what could have been if we had followed His plan.

By looking to God, the Israelites would have become more like Him, but with a man as king, they would end up looking to a sinful human being instead. They would trust in human strength, rather than divine power, and when the king sinned, the people would follow.

When God told Samuel that Israel could have a king, he was also to tell them that God did not approve, and what the result of this choice would be. Faithfully giving the message, Samuel told the Israelites, you will become like servants to the king and will have to do whatever he wants. He will live in luxury, and you will have to pay for it in taxes. He will take your best young men to work for him on construction projects, and to serve in the military. He will take your daughters to cook and clean in his palace. He will take the best land, even if it is the land God gave to your family. You will all be like servants to the king, and you will cry out from oppression by your own king. And the people said, "We don't care, we want a king so we can be like the nations around us, then we will always have a judge, and he will also protect us."

God had wanted Israel to be different from all other nations, but they wanted to be the same. Christians often do the same thing when they try to be more like the world. Some use the excuse that they can be a better witness when they are more like those they are trying to reach, but when they become friends with the world, they become the enemies of God. [1 Peter 2:9](#) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. [1 Peter 2:9 NLT](#).

Samuel was sad to hear the demands of Israel, and God told him to give them what they wanted. As the second in command under God as Israel's judge, Samuel had great power and authority but did not use it for his own gain. His life of purity, unselfishness, and faithfulness to God were very different from priests and leaders in Israel that tried to benefit from their positions. The people rejected their humble leader for someone who would rule over them. The pure and humble Jesus was also rejected because the Jews were looking for a Messiah to lead them to a military victory over Rome. If Jesus had supported the leaders instead of pointing out their sins, they would have accepted Him as their king. It has always been this way in this sinful world. [2 Timothy 3:12](#) Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. [2 Timothy 3:12 NLT](#).

Israel was content to allow Samuel and God to pick their first king. Maybe to teach them a lesson, God chose someone tall, strong, and handsome, which was exactly what they envisioned for their king. Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin was the person who fit this physical description. [1 Samuel 9:2](#) ... Saul was

the most handsome man in Israel--head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land. [1 Samuel 9:2 NLT](#). But Saul was lacking in wisdom, self-control, and most importantly a personal relationship with God. On the positive side, even though his family was wealthy, Saul as a young man carried out humble duties, such as searching for donkeys that had escaped.

Saul and a family servant had been searching for 3 days and had not found the animals, so realizing they were near the home of the prophet Samuel, the servant proposed that they could ask him for help. When they came close to Ramah, they saw some young women going to the well to get water and asked them where they could find the prophet. The women told them that they had arrived just in time for the sacrifice and feast where they could find Samuel. Before Samuel's reforms, the Israelites had hated giving sacrificial offerings to God [[1 Samuel 2:17](#)]. When they reached the gate of the city, they met Samuel himself, but not recognizing him, they asked where the prophet lived. God had already told Samuel about Saul, and now God spoke to him and told him, "This is the man I told you about that will reign over My people." Samuel told Saul that he was the prophet, and not to worry about the animals because they had already been found, but that they should stay for the feast. Then he added, "All Israel is anxiously waiting for something, and it is you they are waiting for."

Saul knew that Israel was waiting for their first king, but in humility he answered Samuel, "I am from Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my family is not even important in the tribe. Why would they be waiting for me?" Samuel then took him to the feast where all the leaders of the town were, and the seat where the most important person would normally sit was given to Saul. After the feast Samuel took Saul home and told him that he was to become king. He took some time to explain the way the government of Israel was supposed to work with the earthly king enforcing and carrying out the plans of God, the true King. Before Saul left the next morning Samuel anointed him with oil, then to help him believe that he was called by God, he was told of some things that would happen.

On his way home, just as Samuel said, someone met him and told him that the donkeys had been found. Then he met 3 men who were going to worship God at Bethel, one had 3 small goats for sacrifice, another had 3 loaves of bread, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> had a bottle of wine. They greeted Saul and gave him 2 loaves of bread. Then as he arrived at his hometown of Gibeah, he met some prophets that were returning from the place of worship, and they were singing songs of praise to God together with the music from a flute, a stringed instrument, a tambourine, and a harp. When Saul came near to them, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took over him, and he became like a different person, and he started to sing and even prophesy with them. The people who saw this even asked, "Is Saul a prophet?"

In this short experience of being possessed by the Holy Spirit, Saul got a great sense of the sinfulness of man, and the holiness of God. He understood how he could carry out the will of God, with this great power of the Spirit. In that moment of clarity, he clearly understood the plan of salvation. And he was left with courage and wisdom for the great work ahead of him.

Saul had been anointed privately, so no one else knew of it, and now God would make His choice known to all Israel. Samuel sent messengers to all Israel, asking them to gather at Mizpeh for a big announcement. When the people arrived, Samuel began with prayer, and then they began the process of drawing lots by which God would make known His choice for their first king. First the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, then the family, and next the household of Kish, and finally Saul. But when Samuel called for him to come forward, no one came. Saul was feeling uncertain about his ability to take on the great responsibility and had hidden rather than come forward. But when he was finally found and introduced to the people, they saw how tall and strong and handsome he was, and they were pleased with the choice. Saul was so tall that normal people standing next to him only reached the height of his shoulders. Then all the people shouted, "God save the king!"

Samuel then explained to the people what he had already told Saul, that God was still their High King, and that Saul and all future kings would always be second in command to Him. Even though the people were wanting to replace Samuel, he still had their best interest at heart. He wrote a constitution that outlined the responsibilities of the king, and the rights of the people.

Many people were ready to accept Saul as king based on his outward appearance, but there were some who didn't like the idea that someone from the small tribe of Benjamin would rule over the much larger tribes of Judah and Ephraim. In fact, it was the people most vocal in asking for a king that rejected the man God had chosen. They wanted someone from their own tribe, or maybe even themselves to be chosen as king. To his credit, Saul did not push the issue and returned home, resuming his normal duties, leaving Samuel to continue as Judge of the land.

A short time later, the Ammonites led by king Nahash conquered some of the Israelite territory east of the Jordan and then surrounded the city of Jabesh-Gilead. Trying to avoid death and destruction, the people offered to pay tribute to Nahash, but the cruel king said the only way he would let them live is if he removed the right eye of every person in the city. They begged him to give them 7 days to see if anyone would rescue them, and if not, they would accept his terms of surrender. So, they sent messengers to Saul asking for help. When Saul heard the news, the Spirit of God came over him, and he took a couple oxen that were used for plowing

fields, and cut them up into 12 pieces and sent them to each of the tribes with the message, "Anyone who doesn't join Saul and Samuel to defend the people of Jabesh-Gilead will have their oxen cut up like this." And 330,000 men showed up on the plain of Bezek, with 30,000 of them being from the tribe of Judah alone. So, Saul immediately sent a reply to the people of Jabesh-Gilead, letting them know they would be rescued before the deadline. The Israelite army marched all night, arriving just in time, and they attacked the Ammonites and beat them so badly that of the few who escaped, they were scattered so that there were not even 2 people together.

The quick action, leadership, and bravery of Saul is exactly what the people were hoping for. Now they welcomed the victorious army back, and greeted Saul as king, giving him the glory of the victory instead of God. Then they said, let's round up those who opposed Saul and kill them. But Saul said, "No one will be put to death today, for the Lord has saved Israel today." Giving God the glory and not taking revenge on his opponents was a good way to start his reign and showed that the Spirit of God was working in him. Samuel then called for everyone to assemble again, this time at Gilgal, where Saul would officially be confirmed as king, and everyone was happy.

Many important things had taken place at Gilgal. It was the first place the Israelites had camped when they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. The 12 stone monument from the crossing was there. It was there that the Israelites were allowed to resume the rite of circumcision and keep the first Passover since the sin at Kadesh almost 40 years before. There the manna stopped. God appeared in person there to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord's people and Commander of the armies of Israel.

Then Samuel said to the people, "I have done what you wanted, and set up a king over you. I am old and have led you since I was a child. If there is anyone whose possessions I have taken, or cheated, or oppressed, or taken a bribe and given unfair judgment to, speak up now and I will make it right." All the people responded and said you have done none of those things. Samuel was not just trying to make himself look righteous but was proving that he had lived by the rules of the government he was now setting up. He had always honored and obeyed God and not taken advantage of the people for his own gain.

Samuel knew that Israel could never truly be rich, and powerful unless they repented of their sins, and obeyed God's laws. When they sinned, they had lost God's protection, and other nations could defeat them, but when they were being oppressed by other nations, they lost their confidence in God to be their King and protector. It was a cycle that started when they sinned and turned away from God

in the first place. Samuel reminded them of their history, about how God fought their battles for them after He brought them out of Egypt. But when they sinned and turned away from Him, their enemies had power over them. And when they repented and turned back to Him, He raised up people like Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and even himself, to lead them to victory. The people thought with a king they would always have someone like those who judged and protected them, ignoring the fact that God was always there as their King and protector, if they would obey Him.

Then Samuel said, "You will now get a sign from God to show that He is not pleased with your request for a king." It was the time of year for harvesting wheat, and at that time of year, they did not get heavy rain and thunderstorms. It was a clear and cloudless day, but Samuel said, "When I call on the Lord, He will send thunder and rain." So, Samuel called on the Lord, and a terrible storm came, and the people were frightened and confessed their sin and begged Samuel to pray to God that they would not die. He prayed for them and then gave them this message, "Fear not, you have done this wickedness, but do not turn away from following the Lord and serving him with all your heart and He will not forsake you. But if you do wickedness, you and your king will be consumed."

## *Chapter 60—The Presumption of Saul*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 13-14](#).

After defeating the Ammonites, Saul released the army, keeping only 2,000 under his command, and 1,000 under his son Jonathan. This was a mistake, because with their enthusiasm and momentum, they could have continued the work of clearing the land of the enemies of Israel that had stopped when Joshua retired. Even though God had defeated the Philistines at Ebenezer, they still occupied some of the cities that had belonged to Israel. Over the many years that the Philistines had been oppressing Israel, they had stopped them from making their own swords and spears, by preventing any Israelites from becoming blacksmiths. If the Israelites needed any work on their plows or any other non-military metal objects, they would have to go to Philistine smiths. Even now that they had a king, the Israelites still had no blacksmiths and because of that, only Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear.

In the second year of Saul's reign, Jonathan attacked the Philistine base at Geba and took it. In response, the Philistines prepared for a large-scale attack on Israel. So, Saul sent a call throughout Israel, ordering all military age men to assemble at Gilgal, while the Philistines assembled 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and too many foot soldiers to count, at Michmash. The Israelite army, without swords or spears, were terrified and began to desert, some hiding among the rocks and caves nearby, but some even fleeing back across the Jordan. When Samuel had told Saul to assemble at Gilgal, he told him to wait 7 days for him to arrive and offer a sacrifice to God and tell him what to do next.

As Saul waited for Samuel, he did not inspire his army with confidence, and it kept shrinking more and more each day. God intended that they should use this time to search their hearts for sin that they could repent of, so that He could fight for them. But instead of trusting in God, they were looking to their king, and he was nervous and impatient. The 7<sup>th</sup> day came, and Samuel had still not arrived, and thinking he needed to do something to stop his army from disappearing, he decided to offer the sacrifice himself. So, dressed as a soldier, with armor and weapons, he stepped up to the altar and offered the sacrifice. He had just finished when Samuel arrived, and seeing what Saul had done, asked why he didn't wait. Saul said, "The people were scattering, and you didn't show up on time, so I thought I had to do something."

Samuel said to Saul, "You have made a foolish mistake, and you have disobeyed the command of God. If you had remained obedient to Him, your descendants would have sat on the throne for years to come, but now God will choose another

king, who will be obedient to Him, to be king over His people." Saul had shown that if he didn't agree with the command of God, that he would do what he wanted, which made him unfit to be king. God knows what is best for us and requires strict obedience to His commands, and most of His promises are conditional on obedience to Him.

Saul had received the gift of the Holy Spirit before he became king, to teach him and to soften his heart. He also had Samuel up to this point to advise and to correct him. But when he was young, Saul had not learned to love and obey God, and now he did whatever he wanted. Those who continually use the gifts of God for their own purposes when they are young, will not easily be able to switch course when they are older.

Saul was not able to stop the people from deserting, and soon he was left with only 600 men, so he left Gilgal and went to Geba. Saul was on the south side of a deep and rugged gorge that separated him from the Philistines. God would not honor Saul now with a victory over the Philistines, but Jonathan, the king's son loved and honored God. He was moved by the Spirit to go with only his armor-bearer to attack, because he knew that God was with them, and He can accomplish His purpose through many or just a few.

Jonathan's armor-bearer was also a man of faith, and without asking for Saul's permission, they sneaked across the valley to the base of the cliff leading up to the Philistine camp. They had come up with a sign, so they would know what God wanted them to do. They said to each other, if the Philistines tell us to come up to them, then we will know that God will give us victory over them, and we should go up and attack. When they revealed themselves, the Philistines said to them, "Look the Hebrews have come out of the holes they were hiding in. Come up here and we will show you a thing or two." It was the sign, so Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbed the steep cliff and when they reached the top, killed the man who was on watch. It was not well guarded because it would have been impossible for a large-scale attack to come from that direction. Angels were with Jonathan and his armor-bearer and fought side by side with them. About 20 Philistines had been killed, when the ground began to tremble as if a great company of horses and chariots were coming. Then the Philistines knew that God was helping the Israelites, and they became very afraid, and began fighting and killing each other.

Soon, Saul's camp could hear the sound of battle across the valley and saw great confusion and fighting in the Philistine camp. When they discovered that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were missing, they realized that it must have been them who attacked the Philistines. Saul quickly led his few men to join the battle, and soon many of the deserters came out of their hiding places and joined the fighting as

well. Now for some strange reason, Saul had commanded his men that anyone who ate anything before his enemies were completely defeated would be cursed. In some way Saul hoped to get some credit for completing the defeat of the Philistine army. This rash command showed how little Saul cared about the needs of his men, and it only slowed their progress when they were out of energy after fighting and chasing all day. When the victory was complete, the men were so hungry that they immediately began eating the meat of the captured animals without draining the blood out first, and in that way broke one of God's laws.

Now Jonathan had not heard the king's command and curse on anyone who ate before the Philistines were completely defeated. He had come across some honey in the woods and had eaten some, which gave him some much-needed energy to continue the fight. After the battle, when Saul found out that Jonathan had disobeyed his command, because of the vow he made, he said, "Jonathan must die." Now Saul was trying to show how unchangeable his royal decrees were, and how honorable he was by carrying out the terms of his vow, even if it cost the life of his son. But the soldiers were willing to stand up to the king, and said, "God forbid that Jonathan should die. It was he that delivered this great victory to us with God's help." This made Saul feel that the people respected his son more than him. It gave the king a way to save the life of his son without breaking his vow himself, but Saul went home depressed and unhappy.

Often those who condemn and judge others find ways to justify their own sins and reject advice and reproof. Even if they can see that God is not with them, they do not think it is because of their own actions. They would do well to take these words of Jesus to heart, [Matthew 7:2](#) For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. [Matthew 7:2 NLT](#).

Saul's honor and power were more important to him than justice, mercy, or love. If the soldiers had not saved Jonathan, he would have been killed by his own father. At this time, the Israelites began to see their mistake in exchanging the holy prophet, who cared for them and prayed for them, for a king who cared only for himself. How could they follow the lead of someone like that. Sometimes it seems that bad people succeed or are in positions of power over others, but eventually, they will suffer the consequences of their actions.

## *Chapter 61—Saul Rejected*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 15](#).

Saul had made mistakes at Gilgal, but God would still give him another chance to show his willingness to obey. Saul was not happy with the way Samuel had treated him, so he avoided him. But God sent Samuel to Saul with his next task to see if he would obey and prove himself worthy to continue as king. Samuel said, using God's words, "Thus says the Lord of armies, because Amalek attacked Israel when they came out of Egypt, go now and destroy them. Kill every man, woman, child, and animal." The Amalekites were a wicked nation that had attacked Israel when they had just come out of Egypt. For this and their terrible idolatry, God had pronounced a death sentence on them [[Deuteronomy 25:19](#)] that would not be carried out for over 400 years. In that time the Amalekites had not turned from their wickedness, and it was time for the long-delayed sentence to be carried out.

When God has mercy on the wicked, giving them time to repent, sometimes they think there are no consequences, so they become more wicked. But unforgiven sin will always be punished, either in this life, and for sure in the afterlife. For a loving and merciful God, punishment is called an unusual or strange act [[Isaiah 28:21](#)]. [Ezekiel 33:11](#) As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. ... [Ezekiel 33:11 NLT](#). [Exodus 34:6](#) The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. <sup>7</sup> I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. ... [Exodus 34:6-7 NLT](#). [Nahum 1:3](#) The LORD is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. ... [Nahum 1:3 NLT](#).

An example of God's mercy when the sentence against the Amalekites was carried out was that the Kenites who lived among them were not to be destroyed. Some of them worshipped idols, but many of them worshipped God, and they were friendly to Israel. In fact, they were related by marriage to Moses, through Hobab who even traveled and helped Israel as they went through the wilderness.

Since the victory over the Philistines at Michmash, Saul had successful military campaigns against the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Amalekites and Philistines. Now they prepared for war again, this time at the command of God through Samuel. This would not be a normal war because they would not be able to take the usual spoils of war but were to destroy everything. This military campaign was successful, destroying the Amalekites from Havilah, all the way to Shur, next to Egypt. But Saul only partially obeyed God, when he kept King Agag

alive, and some of the best animals. It was customary for victorious kings to bring back prisoners of war to be used as slaves, but it was even more impressive to have the defeated king among them. Saul's army had killed all the rest of the people but at his command had kept Agag alive. Saul also thought it a waste to kill all the animals, so he told his men to keep the best-looking ones. They thought that if they killed these animals as sacrifices later, they could keep more of their own animals.

Then God spoke to Samuel and said, "I'm sorry that I made Saul king, because he is no longer following Me, and is not obeying My commands." This made Samuel very sad, and he cried all night for him. When God is sorry He did something, it does not mean He changed His mind or made a mistake. It means that things have changed so that they are worse than before, but it was man who changed and not God. [Hebrews 13:8](#) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. [Hebrews 13:8 NLT](#). [James 1:17](#) Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. [James 1:17 NLT](#).

When Saul saw Samuel, he proudly declared that he had successfully carried out the command of God. But Samuel could already hear something that told him otherwise. He said, "Why am I hearing the sound of sheep and oxen?" Saul said, "Oh, the men wanted to save the best sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord, but the rest were completely destroyed." So, Saul blamed the men for doing what he had told them to do. Samuel was very unhappy and told Saul, this is what God said to me, "When you were first made king, you were humble, but now you are disobeying the commands of the Lord." Then Saul said, "But I did exactly what God wanted, I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought their king Agag, as a prisoner of war, and the men saved the best animals to sacrifice to God." Samuel answered, "Do you think the Lord delights in burnt offerings and sacrifices, more than obeying His commands? Obeying is much better than sacrifice. Rebelling against the command of God is as bad as practicing witchcraft, and being stubborn is as bad as worshipping idols. Since you have rejected the command of God, He has rejected you as king."

When Saul heard the sentence passed on him by God, he cried out and said, "I have sinned and disobeyed the Lord, because I was afraid to go against the will of the men, so I let them do what they wanted." Saul finally admitted that they did not do exactly what God had commanded, but he still blamed the men. Saul was not actually sorry that he had disobeyed but was sorry that he was losing the support of Samuel, because all Israel respected the prophet. Saul was even more upset about losing the support of Samuel, than he was about losing the support of God. He was even afraid the nation might immediately reject him and no longer acknowledge him as king. As Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed his cloak, and in the

struggle, it tore. Then Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone who is better than you." But Saul begged Samuel not to leave and to worship God together with him. So, Samuel stayed, and they worshipped the Lord. Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag to me." Of all the people that were punished with death, Agag was the guiltiest. He had no mercy on anyone, was the strongest supporter of idolatry in their kingdom, and would have completely destroyed Israel if he could have. As he was brought to Samuel, he thought to himself that the danger of death had passed. But Samuel said to him, "Your sword has made mothers lose their sons, and now your mother will be childless." Then Samuel cut him in pieces before the Lord, and then he returned home to Ramah.

Saul had some character flaws when he was first called to be king, but at least he was humble. There was no example of how the kingdom of Israel should function, but the Holy Spirit was available to guide him. If he had remained humble and teachable, he would have been successful. His good characteristics would have been strengthened, and his evil tendencies would have become weaker. To be humble and teachable are the most important characteristics to be used by God for His work.

Some of Saul's early victories made him proud and self-confident. The honor and credit he received for saving the people of Jabesh-Gilead, that should have been directed to God, he took for himself. Then when he began to think he was great, he stopped being teachable and didn't feel his need of God. This led to his sin of offering a sacrifice himself. Then when he was corrected by Samuel, he justified his actions, blamed others and refused to admit he was wrong. But God did not abandon Saul just because he made one mistake. Samuel continued to tell Saul what he should do, and he could have learned from his mistakes. It can be humiliating to admit we did wrong, or failed, but if we learn from our mistake that we cannot do God's will without His help, then our failure would have served a good purpose. When Saul kept rejecting the counsel and reproof of God through Samuel, he failed to learn and improve from his mistakes.

At Gilgal, Saul thought he was showing how religious he was by offering the sacrifice, but his motives were not right and trying to be religious while disobeying God only harmed him. Against the Amalekites, he chose which parts of God's command he thought were important and followed them. But God was not pleased with his partial obedience. [Deuteronomy 12:8](#) "Your pattern of worship will change. Today all of you are doing as you please, [Deuteronomy 12:8 NLT](#). [Deuteronomy 12:28](#) Be careful to obey all my commands, so that all will go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and pleasing to the

LORD your God. [Deuteronomy 12:28 NLT](#). [Proverbs 14:12](#) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death. [Proverbs 14:12 NLT](#).

God was very clear through the prophet Samuel, that obedience was more important than sacrifice. Without obedience, repentance, and faith, sacrifices were useless. We are no different today if we make a big show of being religious, and we keep most of God's commands but knowingly ignore 1 or 2. Knowingly disobeying even a single command of God is rebellion, and it is just as bad as practicing witchcraft, and worshipping idols. Satan was the first to rebel against the government of God, and those who join him in rebellion are joining his side. When you join Satan's team, he slowly convinces you that you are doing good, even though you are disobeying God. An example of this is that the rebels Korah, Dathan, and Abiram thought they were doing God's will when they opposed Moses. The Jewish leaders also thought they were honoring God by killing Jesus. The same thing has happened over and over throughout history.

Saul knew that Samuel was inspired by God, and when he continued to ignore the messages and commands of God that were brought by him, he eventually became unable to see that he was doing anything wrong. Saul put a lot of effort into getting rid of idolatry and witchcraft in Israel, but his own disobedience was as bad as what he was trying to get rid of. Those who keep rejecting the correction offered by the Holy Spirit, eventually become unable to hear His voice, and finally will end up thinking they are doing a great job, even if they are going against the Commands of God.

In Saul, God had given the Israelites a king that they approved of. He looked like someone that could lead their armies and command the respect of other nations. Love for God and obedience to His commands were not the criteria they were thinking about. So, God gave them what they wanted, hoping that they would see their mistake and turn back to Him. For the next king, God chose someone He called "a man after His own heart" [[1 Samuel 13:14](#)]. That didn't mean someone who was perfect, but someone who would trust God, listen to His Spirit, and when he made a mistake, would acknowledge it and repent.

## *Chapter 62—The Anointing of David*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#).

David was born in the town of Bethlehem, just a few miles south of what would become the nation's capital, Jerusalem, also called "the city of the great king." More than 1000 years later, Jesus would be born in the same town, and though He would lay in a manger among the animals, He would be worshipped by Wise Men from the East. When David was a young boy, he learned to be a shepherd, and as he watched his sheep, he composed and sang songs accompanied by his harp. This was the life that God used to prepare David for the great work ahead of him.

Even while David was a young shepherd, God spoke to Samuel and said, "Why do you keep crying for Saul whom I have rejected? Take your horn of oil to Bethlehem and anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be the next king. Take a young cow and go there to meet with the elders of the town and the family of Jesse and offer a sacrifice and worship with them. When you are there, I will let you know what to do." Samuel did as God commanded, and when he arrived, the elders of the town feared they were in trouble, and asked Samuel if he came in peace. Samuel answered, "I come in peace. Build an altar for a sacrifice and invite Jesse and his sons to join us."

After the sacrifice, Samuel asked for the sons of Jesse to be introduced to him, one at a time. When Eliab, the oldest, stood before him, Samuel was very impressed. Physically, he was tall, well built, and handsome, like Saul, and Samuel thought to himself, this must be the one that God has chosen as the next king. But God said to Samuel, "Do not look at his height, or his face, or how good he looks, because I have rejected him. Man sees what is on the outside, but I see what is in his heart." Eliab did not love and respect the Lord, and if he had become king, he would have been a proud and harsh ruler. The lesson for us is that it is impossible for us to know what a person is truly like just from their outward appearance.

The 7 sons of Jesse all walked before Samuel, and God did not choose any of them. Samuel was confused and asked Jesse if these were all his sons, to which he answered, "There is the youngest, who is out watching over the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him immediately, we will not sit down for dinner until he comes."

David was surprised that the prophet of Israel had asked for him specifically, but he immediately left the sheep with the servants and obeyed the call. When Samuel saw David, he noticed that he was also good looking, but he also had a healthy look, like someone who was physically active. But in addition to his outward appearance, David's bravery had already been tested in his humble job as a shepherd. God said to Samuel, "This is the one, anoint him to be the captain of My

people." So, there in front of everyone present, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David, and the Spirit of the Lord was with David from that time forward.

Being chosen by the prophet, above all his brothers did not make David proud, or even change his job as the shepherd for the family flock. David continued to compose songs, but now he had special inspiration of the Spirit of God, added to his normal creativity. He was inspired to see the greatness and majesty of God in the beauty of nature that God created. It was as if he was composing and singing songs in response to the songs sung by angels in heaven.

It is impossible to measure the impact those lonely years of hard work, and communion with God in nature, had on the future life of David. But without question, the Psalms of David in the Bible have brought many people closer to God. David had natural gifts and abilities that God had given him, but he developed them in those early years as a shepherd and used them to glorify God. David loved God and was loved by God and the angels. The inspiration he received as he spent long hours surrounded by nature, and thinking about its Creator, gave him clearer ideas of God, and helped him to understand difficult things.

## *Chapter 63—David and Goliath*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 16:14-23](#); [17](#).

When Saul fully realized that he had been rejected by God, he became depressed and rebellious. He thought his victories over enemies of Israel should outweigh his few minor mistakes, which he didn't see as sins of disobedience against God. His rebellion against God's judgment which he thought was unfair, made him paranoid and suspicious about rivals to his throne. Together with his depression and unstable mental state, Saul was on the edge of going crazy. Some even thought he was being troubled by an evil spirit. His counselors hoped that music might calm his troubled mind and brought David to sing and play his harp for the king. His heaven-inspired music did help and when Saul seemed better, David returned to the fields to shepherd his flock.

David was growing in his relationship with God, and he was also getting noticed for his abilities. His exposure to the king's court gave him some idea of what his future would be like, and he took note of the temptations that came with that life. When he saw the dark cloud of unhappiness that surrounded the household of Saul, he was worried that the same thing might happen to him. But keeping his mind firmly anchored on God, and singing music of Praise to Him, helped to drive away those troubling thoughts.

Like He did with Moses, God used the humble task of being a shepherd to prepare David for the great job that lay ahead of him. As he watched over his helpless flock, he gained an appreciation for how God must be like a shepherd as he cared for weak and sinful humanity.

The lonely fields where David watched his sheep were not safe from wild animals that threatened him and his flock. His courage and his responsibility to protect his sheep were tested by both a lion and a bear. With only his sling a staff and his bare hands, David killed those beasts, even rescuing a lamb from their mouth. [1 Samuel 17:34](#) But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep and goats," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. [1 Samuel 17:34-35 NLT](#). Even before David played his harp for the king, when he was recommended by Saul's counselors, they described him this way, [1 Samuel 16:18](#) ... he is a brave warrior, a man of war, and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the LORD is with him." [1 Samuel 16:18 NLT](#).

Now there was war between the Israelites and the Philistines, and Jesse's 3 oldest son enlisted in the army. One day Jesse asked David to take some food and

supplies to his brothers and bring back a report of how they were doing. Just as David arrived at the Israelite camp, the two sides were facing each other for battle. Then Goliath, a giant, and the Philistine champion stepped forward, and insulted Israel and God and challenged them to send someone out to fight him. He had been doing this for days and Israel could not find someone brave enough to fight him. When David saw that the Israelites were afraid and refused to accept the challenge even though Goliath mocked God, he was fired up to fight and defend God's honor. Eliab was jealous of David because Samuel had honored and chosen him, and now as the oldest brother, he wanted to put him in his place. He said, "What are you doing here? And who is watching those few sheep that you are responsible for? I know you are proud of your abilities, but now you are just being mischievous and annoying, because you just want to see the battle." David, answered his brother, "What have I done? There is a reason I came."

Soon, word reached Saul that there was someone in the camp making a commotion. So, when David was brought to Saul, he said, "Let no one be afraid because of this giant. I will go and fight him myself." David told Saul about his fights with lions and bears, and said God will deliver this Philistine into my hand. Then Saul, probably relieved that someone was finally willing to accept the challenge, said, "Go and may the Lord be with you."

Goliath had been challenging and mocking the Israelites for 40 days, and in that time, not a single person had volunteered to accept the challenge. Goliath was about 10 feet tall, and fully protected by armor, and he had a massive spear and sword, and someone holding a shield in front of him. His routine was to appear 2 times each day, in the morning and again in the evening. He would shout out, "Why are you acting like you are ready for battle, when twice a day I come out and challenge you, but no one wants to fight? We can settle this battle in one-on-one combat. If one of you can kill me, we will become your servants, but if I kill your man, you will all become our servants. I defy the armies of Israel to come up with someone to accept my challenge."

Saul had given David permission to fight Goliath, and he was hoping that it could end this embarrassing nightmare, but he didn't see any way that David could win. Saul tried to help by suiting David up with his own armor, but David was not used to wearing the heavy armor and took it off. Instead, David chose to fight the giant with only his sling and shepherd's staff. As David approached the giant, he stopped and picked 5 smooth stones from a little stream. When Goliath saw his challenger, he was filled with amazement and anger. He said, "Am I a dog that you come out to fight me with sticks and stones?" Then he started shouting out every curse he could think of, then said, "Come to me boy, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

David showed no fear as he answered Goliath, "You come to me with a sword, and spear, and shield, but I am armed with the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have made fun of. Today, God will deliver you into my hand and I will knock you down and cut off your head, and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistines to the birds of the air, and to the beasts of the field. Then everyone will know that the Lord can win without sword and spear, and He will give us the victory."

Goliath became so angry, he rushed forward to kill David, pushing his helmet back and exposing his forehead. At the same time David ran forward, and with his sling, launched a stone at the giant. The stone hit Goliath on the forehead, and he staggered and fell. Without any hesitation, when he reached the giant, David took Goliath's own sword and cut off his head.

Everyone on both sides had been certain of the outcome, but now the Philistines were struck with terror and confusion. The Israelites let out a shout of victory and began to attack and chase the Philistines. Many were killed all along the way to the gates of their own cities. The Israelites then returned and collected all the valuables from the tents of the Philistines, and David took Goliath's armor, and his head.

## *Chapter 64—David a Fugitive*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 18-22](#).

After David killed Goliath, Saul refused to let him return home, and he became best friends with Jonathan, the king's son. Jonathan gave him clothes, a sword and a bow. And Saul began putting him in charge of some military operations, and David was successful in everything he did, and the people loved him. Saul began to see God's blessing on everything David did and hoped his kingdom and personal safety would benefit from it. In his new job, David was able to gain knowledge of how the kingdom operated, and he was also gaining the confidence and recognition of the nation.

One day Saul and David returned from a victory over the Philistines, and the women came out to greet them singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten-thousands." Saul really enjoyed hearing people praise him, and this made him very jealous. He thought to himself, if I allow this to continue, David will have my throne next.

Now, in Saul's times of depression, he could also get very angry at anyone who disagreed with him, even to the point of killing them. One day when Saul was in one of his moods, David was playing his harp for him, and Saul went into a jealous rage and threw his spear at him but missed. David had been chosen by God to be the next king, so nothing Saul did to kill David could succeed. David continued to command men in the army, and he was wise and successful in everything he did. Saul began to fear David more and more and kept looking for opportunities to kill him.

Saul began to realize that David was so beloved by the people that he couldn't get away with just killing him for no reason. He wanted to have a good reason to execute him, or better yet get him killed in battle. Saul started some rumors that he would give his oldest daughter to David as a wife if he would declare war on the Philistines and win. David humbly said, "Who am I, and who is my family in Israel that I could have an opportunity to be the king's son-in-law?" David defeated the Philistines, but Saul gave his daughter in marriage to someone else. When Saul found out his youngest daughter, Michael, was in love with David, he tried again to get David killed by the Philistines, by making the same offer he had for his oldest daughter. David was victorious again, and this time became the son-in-law of the king. Finally, in desperation, and probably in one of his depressed moods, Saul ordered everyone in his court to kill his enemy, David. But Jonathan stood up to his father asking what David had done that was worthy of death. In fact, he pointed

out how David had always been faithful and successful for the benefit of the kingdom. Then Saul calmed down and took back his order.

David continued to be successful in battle against the Philistines, and the people praised him more and more. One day as David was playing his harp for the king, Saul threw his javelin at him again, hoping to pin him to the wall with it, but David escaped without harm. Then Saul sent men to watch his house and to kill him when he came out the door in the morning. But Michael discovered her father's plan and told David to escape through the window that night and flee for his life. This time David did run from Saul and went to Samuel, who welcomed him at his home in Ramah.

Samuel had retired from being Judge, but he had continued his work as headmaster at the school of the prophets. On the campus in Ramah, there was a group of young prophets, who studied the law, and reverently listened to the words of the prophet Samuel. David did not think he had brought danger to Samuel and the school because he thought Saul would never invade a place like that. But Saul sent men to arrest and bring David so he could kill him. But when the men reached to school campus, they were taken over by the Spirit of God and joined with the prophets in prophesying. This happened a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time, so finally Saul went himself, so angry that he was planning to kill David immediately. But the same thing happened to Saul, and as he approached, he prayed, sang, and prophesied of the coming Messiah. When he arrived, he removed his royal robes and lay there under the influence of God for a whole day and night.

After this Saul withdrew the standing order for everyone to kill David, but David didn't believe it. He secretly met Jonathan who believed his father was telling the truth, but they came up with a plan to test him. The next day was the new moon feast, and as part of the king's family, David was expected to be present. The plan was for Jonathan to tell the king that David had gone home to be with his family, but he would really be hiding in a field nearby waiting for word from Jonathan.

When the king finally asked why David was missing from the feast, Jonathan spoke up and said, "David asked me for permission to celebrate the feast with his family because his older brother told him he had to be there." When Saul heard this, he exploded with anger, saying to his son, "Don't you realize that as long as David lives, you will never be king? Go and bring him immediately so I can kill him." Jonathan answered, "Why should he be killed? What has he done that is wrong?" Then Saul completely lost control of himself and grabbed his spear and threw it at his own son.

Jonathan of course immediately left the feast and went to the place where he planned to meet up with David. Jonathan reported the bad news, and the two men

hugged each other and cried. It was clear that David would have to go into hiding, moving often, to avoid being caught by Saul. As they parted, they said, "Go in peace, and may the Lord be between us, and our children forever." Then Jonathan went home, and David went to the tabernacle at Nob, where he met with the high priest Ahimelech. Thinking to protect him from having to take sides, David lied to Ahimelech and told him he was on a secret mission for the king. When David asked for some food, the high priest said the only thing available was the holy bread that was removed from the tabernacle when it was replaced with fresh bread. This bread was to only to be eaten by priests, but David was desperate and said he would take it. Then he also asked if there was a weapon of some kind that he could have because he had none. Ahimelech said the only thing they had was the sword of Goliath which had been kept like a museum piece. David said, "There is nothing better than that, I'll take it."

Then thinking he would be safer anywhere outside of Israel, David fled to king Achish of Gath. But when someone identified him as the one who had killed Goliath some years before, David pretended to be a mad man, so they would chase him away. David's lack of faith began to show when he lied to the high priest and continued to show when he faked madness to deceive Achish.

David had shown great faith in God, when he went up against a giant, to defend the honor of God and His people. He continued to trust God in the battles he fought, and as a result won the favor of the people. He even had faith when Saul began persecuting him, but eventually his human weakness began to show. But God had not abandoned him, and when David realized his weakness and need of God, he learned from his mistake. When he listened to the voice of the Spirit of God, he was comforted, encouraged, and strengthened. Every failure by believers is because they don't have enough faith. When it looks like everything is hopeless, trusting God is like a light shining into darkness. David had been anointed by God's command and should have known that God would protect him. That should have comforted him and given him peace even in the shadow of death.

David next fled to the mountains in Judah and lived in the cave of Adullam for a time. It was there that his immediate family found him and came to him. They knew that they were in danger as long as Saul wanted David dead. They knew that David had been chosen to be the next king and felt safer with him in a cave than living in the comfort of home, exposed to the madness of a jealous king. Maybe that is when he wrote the Psalm, [Psalm 133:1](#) ... How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! [Psalm 133:1 NLT](#). It was also there that he wrote [Psalm 57](#).

Many had lost confidence in the king and saw that the Spirit of God was not with him, and some of these came to live with and support David. Others who were in debt, or unhappy, or hopeless, left their homes and went to live in the cave with David. Before long, David had an army of about 400 brave and loyal men. This was that start of David's kingdom, and army, and it was orderly and disciplined. Still not feeling safe, and far from comfortable, David arranged for his parents to live under the protection of the king of Moab.

God was David's protector and warned him through a prophet that Saul had found his hiding place, so he left the cave and fled to the forest of Hareth. When Saul found out that David had escaped, he became very angry and was sure that someone in his camp was a traitor. He begged and pleaded and offered a great reward for someone to turn over the traitor. Finally, Doeg, an Edomite, who had seen Ahimelech help David at the sanctuary saw an opportunity to get the reward, and at the same time hurt the high priest who had reproved him for his sins. He told Saul that Ahimelech had given David food and the sword of Goliath and had asked God some questions for David and given him the answers. Saul was so angry, he not only ordered the death of the high priest of Israel, but the entire family of his father. So, Doeg carried out the king's order and murdered everyone in the city of Nob which were 85 people including the women and children. The Israelites were filled with horror by this terrible act ordered by their own king.

## *Chapter 65—The kindness of David*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 22:20-23; 23-27](#).

One of the sons of Ahimelech named Abiathar had escaped the massacre at Nob and found David and fled to him. David said, when I saw Doeg at the tabernacle, I was afraid he would inform Saul. Now I am guilty of the death of your entire family. Stay with me and you will be safe because we are hiding from the same person.

Now David's personal army had delivered the city of Keilah from the Philistines, but even they were not willing to stand up against Saul and protect David and his men. So, David and his men fled to the wilderness of Ziph. It was there that David received a surprise visit from Jonathan. It was a wonderful reunion for the two friends, and Jonathan encouraged David by saying, "Do not be afraid. I know my father will not catch you and you will become the next king of Israel, and I can be next in the kingdom after you. My father knows that but doesn't want to accept it." Before they parted, they made a solemn promise before the Lord to protect and care for each other's families.

After Jonathan left, David was inspired with the words for the following Psalm: [Psalm 11:1](#) ... A psalm of David. I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, "Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!"<sup>2</sup> The wicked are stringing their bows and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings. They shoot from the shadows at those whose hearts are right.<sup>3</sup> The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?"<sup>4</sup> But the LORD is in his holy Temple; the LORD still rules from heaven. He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth.<sup>5</sup> The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence. [Psalm 11:1-5 NLT](#).

The Ziphites had gone to Saul and told him they would lead him to David, but God warned David who fled to the mountains between Maon and the Dead Sea. Someone reported to Saul that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, so Saul took 3000 of his best men and went to hunt David down in the mountains where the wild goats lived. Saul was closing in on David and his now 600 men who were hiding in a cave. Saul went into their cave to take a nap, and David's men said to him, God has delivered your enemy into your hand. But David was unwilling to kill the Lord's anointed king and only cut off a piece of his clothes. After Saul got up and left the cave, David called out to him from the cave, "My lord the king, why do you listen to people who say I want to harm you. Today, in this cave, you were at my mercy, and my men wanted me to kill you, but I said I would not harm you because you are the Lord's anointed. This piece of cloth I cut from your clothes is

proof that I was standing over you as you slept." Saul was touched by David's mercy, and said, "You are more righteous than me because you were good to me when I have been trying to kill you. You have proved to me that you don't see me as your enemy, because what man would let his true enemy go free? I know God will reward you for sparing my life today, and He will also make you king over Israel after me." Even though Saul stopped chasing him at this time, David had no confidence that Saul would not change his mind, so he stayed in the mountains.

Now Samuel died and all Israel gathered to his hometown of Ramah to mourn for him and to bury him. Samuel was respected by everyone in the nation, and this was a terrible loss for them. From the time he was a child, Samuel had been God's messenger, and for his entire life, he had judged Israel fairly, and justly. Even though Saul was king, in the eyes of the people, Samuel was their true leader. Now that he was gone, the people regretted even more their choice of a king over him. Even though Samuel had continued his work in the school of the prophets, his spiritual leadership of the nation would now be missed. The direct connection they had to God through Samuel was gone, and the people felt it. [James 5:16](#) ... The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. [James 5:16 NLT](#). Now they were left with a madman whom God had rejected as their king.

Of course, David could not be there for Samuel's funeral, but he mourned for him as if Samuel were a beloved father. While Saul was occupied with mourning for Samuel, David took the opportunity to relocate to the wilderness of Paran. Here he wrote the 121<sup>st</sup> and 122<sup>nd</sup> Psalms.

My help comes from the Lord,  
That made heaven and earth.  
He will not let you stumble,  
The One who watches you doesn't sleep.  
He who watches over Israel,  
Never gets distracted or falls asleep.  
The Lord Himself protects you from evil,  
His protection is like a shade over you.  
The Lord protects you from all harm,  
Now, and forever after. [[Psalm 121:2-8](#)]

For lack of anything better to do with their time in the wilderness of Paran, David's men protected the flocks and herds of Nabal from robbers. Nabal was a very wealthy man, but he was also very mean. During the time of sheep shearing, Nabal should have been happy and generous. Since David knew that they had been

helping Nabal, he sent some men to see if Nabal would be grateful and hospitable and give them some food. The young men approached Nabal and said, "Peace to you, your family, and all that you own. You may not know this, but we have been friends with your shepherds and have been protecting them and your animals from all danger. You can ask them, and they will tell you that not a single animal has gone missing since we have been with them. Now we ask that you be kind and generous and give some meat and other food to David and his men, because we hardly have any left." But Nabal answered, "Who is David? I know there are many servants who have run away from their masters. Why should I take food and water that I have prepared for my shearers and give it to men I know nothing about?"

The young men peacefully left and went back empty-handed to David. When David heard what happened, he became very angry, and told his men to arm themselves, and that they would be going to punish that stingy, ungrateful man. This rash decision was very much like something Saul might have done, but it was out of character for David. Fortunately, one of Nabal's servants quickly went to tell his wife, Abigail, about what had happened. They said to her, "Nabal just insulted David's men who came asking for some food and sent them away empty-handed. Those men have been friends with us and have protected us and all our animals from any danger. We're afraid if something isn't done quickly all of us will suffer for what the master has done."

Abigail immediately went into action, loading up donkeys with food and drink and sent them ahead of her. When she met David, who was on his way to punish Nabal, she got down off her donkey and bowed down to the ground at his feet. Then she asked for permission to speak: "My lord, God has kept you from committing murder today, and from avenging wrongs with your own hand. Let God punish your enemies, and those that wish evil on you, including Nabal. I know God will bless you because you fight the battles of the Lord and have done nothing wrong. And when God has given you everything He promised, and you sit on the throne of Israel, you will have no regret for needlessly shedding blood to avenge yourself."

Abigail humbly addressed David as "my lord," and gave God the credit for stopping him from committing murder, rather than taking it for herself. She tactfully suggested that he fight the battles of the Lord, rather than avenging personal insults. The gracious words spoken by Abigail were evidence that she had wisdom from God. Her words were graceful, and kind, and brought the peace of heaven to David. [Matthew 5:9](#) God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. [Matthew 5:9 NLT](#). David then blessed God, and humbly accepted Abigail's advice to him, and gave her credit for keeping him from avenging wrongs done to him by committing murder. To his credit, he thanked her for her advice and accepted the reproof.

Abigail returned home and found Nabal having a drunken feast. The next day, she told him what had happened, and he was so full of fear that he passed out, and did not regain consciousness, and died 10 days later. When David learned that Nabal had died, he sent men to ask Abigail if she would marry him. It was common for men of power in those times to have multiple wives, but this has never been God's plan. Many of David's troubles later in life would be the result of having sons from multiple wives.

David continued to be on the move, this time returning to the wilderness of Ziph. Again, the Ziphites alerted Saul to David's presence, and Saul resumed his hunt. This time David took a different approach, by sneaking into the king's camp one night, making it all the way to the center of camp where the king was sleeping. Abishai, the only one who had come with David whispered to him, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this night. Let me kill him with this spear, and I will not need a second try." But David said, "Do not kill him, for who can harm the Lord's anointed and be guilt free? God will punish him in His own time, or he will die in battle. I will not do a single thing to harm the Lord's anointed. But let's take his spear and his water bottle and get out of here." The entire time David and Abishai were creeping around Saul's camp, not a single person woke up because God had kept them in a deep sleep.

The next morning, when David was a safe distance away, but close enough to be heard, he shouted out toward the camp of Saul, "Abner, aren't you a brave and strong man? There is no one else in Israel like you. How then are you guilty of not protecting your lord the king? Someone was standing over him last night and could have killed him. As the Lord God lives, you deserve to die for this failure to protect your king. Take a look around and tell me if you see the king's spear or water bottle?" Saul recognized David's voice and answered, "Is that you my son David?" David answered, "It is me, my lord the king. Why do you keep chasing after your servant? What have I done to deserve this? Clearly, I am not trying to harm you." The king shouted back, "I have sinned by trying to kill you. I will not try to harm you anymore, because I see that you spared my life this day. Bless you my son, I know that you will succeed in doing great things."

David still didn't trust Saul, and without asking for advice from God, he decided to find safety from him among the Philistines. David took his 600 men and went to Achish, king of Gath. David was very tired of being on high alert all the time and was beginning to doubt that he would ever actually sit on the throne of Israel. David dishonored God by going to the enemies of Israel for protection. The Philistines were actually more afraid of David than they were of Saul and his entire army. Now that they didn't fear fighting David, they were bolder to attack and oppress Israel. God had chosen David to protect His people from their enemies, not

to encourage them. Some in Israel might have assumed that David had permanently defected to the Philistines and even started worshipping their idols as well.

This time David was welcomed by Achish, who had secretly admired him. Now he was flattered that David was coming to him for protection. Feeling safe from Saul, David and his men all brought their wives and children to be with them. To protect them from the influence of idolatry, David asked Achish if they could have their own city, and he gave them Ziklag. While living there, David fought against the Geshurites, Gezerites, and Amalekites, always making sure no one got away to report what he did. Upon returning, he would lie to Achish, telling him he was attacking Israelite cities. Then Achish thought to himself, David has become an enemy to his people, and they will hate him, so he will be my subject forever. David was doing what would have been expected of him if he had been the king of Israel, by destroying wicked nations, but he was not obeying God's commandments when he lied.

The time eventually came when the 5 Philistine kings gathered to go to war against the Israelites. Achish told David, that he and his men would be expected to fight with him against Israel. David knew that he would never fight against his own people, but he didn't want to tell Achish that, so he answered, "You know what me and my men are capable of." Achish assumed what he wanted to believe and eventually envisioned David having a high position in his court. David was in a difficult position, not wanting to blow his cover with Achish, but also knowing he would never fight against his own people.

## *Chapter 66—The Death of Saul*

The Philistines were gathering their forces in Shunem, and Saul and his army were setting up camp a few miles away at the base of Mount Gilboa. The plain of Jezreel between the two camps was the site of the victory given to Gideon by God over the Midianites. Gideon had been full of faith in God, knowing that with only 300 men, it was not up to them to defeat the enemy of God's people. But Saul felt alone and afraid, not knowing what to do. In addition to that he knew that David and his men were with the Philistines and assumed that David would want to get even for the unfair persecution he had suffered.

While Saul had been so occupied by his unreasonable hatred and pursuit of David, he had been neglecting the attacks of the Philistines who had established a foothold in the heart of the country. Satan does the same thing today when he can stir up division in the church, and when they are weak, attack from the outside.

Saul was filled with doom and gloom and wished there was someone he could lean on for advice and encouragement. There was no message from God through dreams or prophets, and when he asked yes or no questions of God through the priest, but the Urim gave no answer [The Urim and Thummim were stones on the breastplate of the high priests by which God could give yes/no answers to questions. [[Numbers 27:21](#)]]. God never turns away or ignores someone who sincerely seeks Him, but Saul had rejected the advice of Samuel, he tried to kill the Lord's anointed, and he had killed the priests. Saul was not asking for forgiveness for his sins, he was only wanting help to defeat the Philistines.

Then Saul told his servants to find a woman who claimed to communicate with the spirits of the dead. This practice was specifically forbidden in Israel, and those who did it were condemned to death. When Samuel was still alive, Saul himself had searched the nation for people who practiced these unholy arts and put them all to death. When his servants found one, Saul tried to disguise himself and in secret went to her in the dark of night. By this act, Saul had placed himself completely under the control of Satan.

When Saul came to the witch of Endor, she was suspicious that it was a trap. She said, "You know what Saul has done, how he has killed those who communicate with spirits, and practice magic. How do I know you are not laying a trap for me?" Saul said, "As the Lord lives, you will not be harmed for doing what I ask." So, she asked, "Who do you want to talk to?" He answered, "Samuel."

The woman did her incantations and then started describing what she was seeing, "I see gods rising up out of the earth, and now I see an old man coming up." Saul assumed it was Samuel, and he bowed down to the ground. But what the woman

saw was not Samuel, because he did not exist as a Spirit, but an evil spirit could take a form that looked like Samuel. When Satan appeared to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, he appeared as an angel of light. Suddenly the woman cried out, "Why have you tricked me? You are Saul!" But he assured her that he would not harm her. Then the evil spirit, pretending that it was Samuel, said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by calling me up?" Saul said, "I am desperate because the Philistines have declared war on me, and God is not answering me, so I called you up to ask what I should do."

When Samuel was alive, Saul had disobeyed his instructions, and had been offended by his reproof, but now Saul was trying to get his advice. Still pretending to be Samuel, the evil spirit said, "If the Lord has rejected you, why are you trying to get advice from me? God has ripped the kingdom from your hand and has given it to David, because you have not obeyed the commands of God, including his command to destroy Amalek. Now God will deliver the Israelites and you into the hand of the Philistines."

Satan often tells people what they want to hear, to make them feel good about themselves when they follow him. But now that he had finished using Saul, he told him the truth, which drove him to despair. Saul had not been eating, and when he heard this news, he collapsed like a dead person. The woman was worried, not wanting the king of Israel to die in her house. When he became conscious, she realized that he was weak from hunger, so she begged him to eat something. After eating something, and still before sunrise, Saul and the men who went with him returned to the Israelite camp.

The next day Saul fought desperately but he was completely without hope of victory. The Israelites fled from the Philistines, and Saul's 3 sons, died fighting beside him. Saul was wounded and the Philistines were closing in on him, and not wanting to be captured alive, he asked his armor bearer to kill him. When his armor bearer refused, Saul fell on his own sword and killed himself.

Seeing how the battle was going, the people in nearby towns abandoned their cities and fled, and the Philistines took possession of them. The next day as they were collecting valuables from the battlefield, the Philistines found the bodies of Saul and his 3 sons. They cut off his head and took his armor and put it in the temple of their god Dagon. The bodies were taken to Beth-Shan and hung up for people to see as they were eaten by birds. But the men of Jabesh-Gilead remembered how Saul had saved them and showed their bravery and thankfulness by their actions. They went at night into Philistine occupied territory and took the bodies of Saul and his sons down from the wall, brought them back, and then respectfully burned them and then buried the remains.

## *Chapter 67—Ancient and Modern Sorcery*

In the story of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor, it describes him talking to the Spirit of Samuel. Some who read the Bible incorrectly assume it was the spirit of Samuel that was called down from heaven to appear on earth. [Samuel was not a spirit in heaven] But no one should believe that Satan has the authority to call anyone from heaven to appear before him whenever he wishes. And God was not responding to Saul through the normal channels of communication, so why would He communicate with him in this way? The Bible itself describes what Saul did to try to talk to Samuel as a sin worthy of death. [1 Chronicles 10:13](#) So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. He failed to obey the LORD's command, and he even consulted a medium <sup>14</sup> instead of asking the LORD for guidance. So the LORD killed him and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse. [1 Chronicles 10:13-14 NLT](#).

Most sorcery and witchcraft have to do with communicating with those who have died. Those who claim to do this say it is possible to learn what will happen in the future from these spirits. [Isaiah 8:19](#) Someone may say to you, "Let's ask the mediums and those who consult the spirits of the dead. With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do." But shouldn't people ask God for guidance? Should the living seek guidance from the dead? [Isaiah 8:19 NLT](#). Psalms describes the sin of the Israelites with the women of Moab, [Psalm 106:28](#) Then our ancestors joined in the worship of Baal at Peor; they even ate sacrifices offered to the dead! [Psalm 106:28 NLT](#). Worshipping the dead is common among heathen religions, including those of the Greeks and Romans.

The widespread belief among Christians today, that their dead loved ones live on as spirits in heaven, causing many to believe it is possible to communicate with them. Spiritualism is the practice of communicating with spirits and is embraced by many who want comfort after the death of a loved one. Many think that angels are the spirits of their loved ones who watch over them. Some who believe this are willing to give more weight to what the spirits say than the word of God.

There are also many who believe there is nothing supernatural about spiritualism, and that it is all fake or trickery. But when those who think this way experience something they cannot explain, they are often led to accept it as truth.

Spiritualism and witchcraft, which are mostly about talking to the dead, are based on the original lie of Satan to Eve. [Genesis 3:4](#) "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." [Genesis 3:4-5 NLT](#). The Bible also adds, [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#) The living at least know they will die, but the dead know

nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered. <sup>6</sup> Whatever they did in their lifetime--loving, hating, envying--is all long gone. They no longer play a part in anything here on earth. [Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 NLT](#). [Psalm 146:4](#) When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. [Psalm 146:4 NLT](#). And this is what God said to Israel about trying to talk to the dead, [Leviticus 20:6](#) "I will also turn against those who commit spiritual prostitution by putting their trust in mediums or in those who consult the spirits of the dead. I will cut them off from the community. [Leviticus 20:6 NLT](#). Familiar spirits are not people who have died, they are evil angels.

All forms of idol worship and any communication with those who have died, are all devil worship. And Paul said this about devil worship, [1 Corinthians 10:20](#) No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons. [1 Corinthians 10:20 NLT](#). Psalms says, [Psalm 106:37](#) They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. <sup>38</sup> They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters. By sacrificing them to the idols of Canaan, they polluted the land with murder. [Psalm 106:37-38 NLT](#).

Modern spiritualism that is so widely accepted by Christians today is built on the same foundation as the witchcraft and demon worship condemned in the Bible. In fact, Paul warns of it, [1 Timothy 4:1](#) Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. [1 Timothy 4:1 NLT](#). [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. [2 Thessalonians 2:9 NLT](#).

Even though Satan is the father of lies, he knows that lies can be much more effective and harder to detect if they are mixed with truth. Giving a correct prediction of the future, such as the defeat and death of Saul, can lead some to have confidence in sorcerers and witches. But the word of God not only warns us of these false teachings, but gives us the tools to detect them, and not be deceived by them.

God doesn't give every detail of what will happen in the future, but He wants us to trust Him. Those who are restless and want more details of future events, who then try to get them by talking with those who have died, are doing what Saul did. They will only gain a knowledge of what the evil one wants them to know. Those who claim to worship a holy, all knowing, and all-powerful God, should not go to the enemy of God for knowledge. God will provide all the knowledge that His people need. Satan's messages may sometimes be true, but they will not lead to repentance and a rejection of sin. More often he will tell the hearer that there is no sin, death, judgment, or punishment. He will eventually lead them to believe that

they are gods, and that God's law is only holding them back. But this is what the Bible says about the human heart and nature. [Jeremiah 17:9](#) "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? [Jeremiah 17:9 NLT](#).

Before the Israelites moved into the land of Canaan, Satan had a strong hold over the people that lived there. When Israel moved in and established the law of God as the law of the land, Satan was furious and began plotting their destruction. Through idol worship and evil spirits, he was successful in bringing about the destruction of most of the Israelites and getting them cast out of Canaan. Satan will never leave God's people in peace and will always be trying to bring about their downfall. [Revelation 12:12](#) ... But terror will come on the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great anger, knowing that he has little time." [Revelation 12:12 NLT](#). [Mark 14:38](#) Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." [Mark 14:38 NLT](#).

God's warning to ancient Israel should be taken to heart by His people today. [Leviticus 19:31](#) "Do not defile yourselves by turning to mediums or to those who consult the spirits of the dead. I am the LORD your God. [Leviticus 19:31 NLT](#). [Deuteronomy 18:12](#) Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the LORD your God will drive them out ahead of you. [Deuteronomy 18:12 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 68—David at Ziklag*

This chapter is based on [1 Samuel 29-30](#); [2 Samuel 1](#).

David had been expected to fight against the Israelites by king Achish, and this was a very difficult situation for him. He did not want to fight against his own people, but he also did not want Achish to know that his loyalties were still with Israel. It was not God's plan that His anointed should be fighting together with the Philistines, so He intervened to prevent David from becoming a traitor to his own country.

The other Philistine princes came to Achish and asked, "Why are these Hebrews here with us?" Achish had been deceived by David into thinking that he had already attacked some of his own people and could never go back to Israel. He answered the princes, "Yes, this is David, the servant of Saul, but he has been with me for a few years, and he has never done anything wrong." But the princes said, "Send him back to the place you gave him. He will not go with us into battle. What better way is there for him to be accepted back by Saul than to turn on us and fight for Israel in the battle? In fact, isn't this David the one that women sang and danced, 'Saul killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'" In fact, these Philistine princes were more afraid of David and his small army than they were of Saul and the entire Israelite army.

So Achish went to David and said to him, "As surely as Jehovah lives, I know you have been honest with me, and what you have been doing is good in my eyes. You have not done anything wrong since you came to me asking for a place to stay. But the Philistine lords don't know you like I do, and they don't want you going into battle with us." David was greatly relieved, but to continue his deception said, "But what have I done wrong that you are not allowing me to go fight your enemies with you?" Achish answered, "In my eyes, you are as good as an angel of God, but the Philistine princes don't trust you and said you cannot go with us. You can remain in camp for the night but in the morning, you and your men should leave." David should have been ashamed of himself, when Achish was even using the name of Jehovah to describe how honest, good, and trustworthy David was.

It took 3 days of marching for David and his men to get back to Ziklag, and they were shocked and filled with horror at the sight that greeted them. They had left the city completely unprotected, and they found it black from fire, and all their wives, children, and everything valuable was gone. With this terrible loss, the men began to weep out loud and didn't stop until they had no more strength to keep crying. In their sorrow and anger, the men blamed David, and threatened to stone him to death. David felt completely alone and cut off from any support. The king

of his own country wanted him dead, the Philistines princes didn't trust him, his wives and children were taken captive, and now his closest friends wanted to kill him. But instead of losing hope, David turned to God. These words were not necessarily written at that time but they showed how David thought, [Psalm 56:3](#) But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. [Psalm 56:3 NLT](#). At this time, David asked for Abiathar the priest, son of the former high priest Ahimelech, to ask God a question. David asked, "If I chase after those who did this, will I catch them?" The answer was, "Go after them because you will definitely catch them and recover everything." [[1 Samuel 30:8](#)].

With this encouraging news, David and the men started their pursuit immediately. They were pushing so hard that when they reached the brook Besor, 200 men were so exhausted they couldn't continue at that pace. So, they stayed there with the stuff and David and 400 men continued their pursuit. Along the way they came across an Egyptian slave who had been left in the field to die. David fed him and gave him something to drink, and he revived. Then he told them that his master was one of the Amalekites soldiers that had attacked Ziklag, and that if they promised not to return him to his master, he would tell them where they were going. Of course, David agreed, and they continued their pursuit and this time in a known direction.

When David and his 400 men caught up with the Amalekites, they were having a grand celebration, with eating, drinking, and dancing, for all the stuff and prisoners they had collected from their attacks on the Philistines, and the land of Judah. David and the men immediately attacked, and as promised by God, everything that had been taken was recovered, including their wives, sons, daughters, and all the things that had been taken. It was God who influenced the Amalekites to want the honor of bringing back prisoners, rather than killing everyone as David had done when he attacked their cities. Every earthly power is under the control of God. [Job 38:11](#) I said, 'This far and no farther will you come. Here your proud waves must stop!' [Job 38:11 NLT](#). God's power is constantly at work on earth, not for destruction, but to hold back the destructive power of evil.

When the victorious army returned to where the 200 men were waiting, some of the selfish and difficult men among the 400 said that the 200 should only get their wives and children back but not their share of the stuff that was recovered. David would not agree to this and made a rule that later became a law in Israel. He said that everything they recovered was given to them by God, and that whoever stays back to guard the camp and supplies shares equally in the things collected after a victorious battle.

In addition to their own things, they had captured great flocks and herds from the Amalekites, and these were called "David's spoils," and he decided to share them with some of the towns in the tribe of Judah that had been friendly to him and protected him when he was hiding from Saul.

When they got back to Ziklag, they anxiously waited for news of the battle between the Philistines and Israel. Finally, a messenger arrived with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. He bowed down before David, who asked if he had news of the battle? The man reported that Saul and Jonathan had been killed, and hoping to get a reward, he boasted that he was the one who kill David's enemy, Saul. He made up a story about how he came upon Saul who was badly wounded, and that Saul asked him to kill him so that he wouldn't be tortured by the Philistines. So, the messenger, thinking he would be rewarded, claimed he had killed Saul and handed David a crown and golden arm bracelets which he claimed to have taken from Saul. But instead of rewarding him, David tore his clothes and wept for Saul and Jonathan and refused to eat anything until evening. Then David asked the messenger who he was, and he answered, "I am an Amalekite." David responded, "How is it that you were not afraid to kill a man who was anointed by God?" Then David said, "By your own admission, you are guilty of killing the Lord's anointed, so by your own testimony, your punishment is death."

David did not celebrate the death of Saul but instead showed true sadness. Of course, the death of Jonathan, his best friend, made it so much worse. David wrote a song to show his feelings about this sad event in the history of Israel.

[2 Samuel 1:19](#) Your pride and joy, O Israel, lies dead on the hills! Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! <sup>20</sup> Don't announce the news in Gath, don't proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice and the pagans will laugh in triumph. <sup>21</sup> O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor fruitful fields producing offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty heroes was defiled; the shield of Saul will no longer be anointed with oil. <sup>22</sup> The bow of Jonathan was powerful, and the sword of Saul did its mighty work. They shed the blood of their enemies and pierced the bodies of mighty heroes. <sup>23</sup> How beloved and gracious were Saul and Jonathan! They were together in life and in death. They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions. <sup>24</sup> O women of Israel, weep for Saul, for he dressed you in luxurious scarlet clothing, in garments decorated with gold. <sup>25</sup> Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies dead on the hills. <sup>26</sup> How I weep for you, my brother Jonathan! Oh, how much I loved you! And your love for me was deep, deeper than the love of women! <sup>27</sup> Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! Stripped of their weapons, they lie dead. [2 Samuel 1:19-27 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 69—David Called to the Throne*

This chapter is based on [2 Samuel 2-5:5](#).

Now that Saul was dead, there was nothing preventing David from returning home to the land of Israel. David asked God if he should go to one of the cities of Judah, and the answer was to go. So, David asked which one, and God told him, Hebron. That city was significant at times in Israel's history. At one time it was occupied by the giant Anak and then his descendants, whom Caleb defeated after choosing that land as the inheritance for his family. It was where the cave of Machpelah was that Abraham bought to bury Sarah, and where he, and later Isaac and Jacob were also buried.

The tribe of Judah, that David was from, was ready and waiting to welcome him and his 600 men and their families. As soon as he arrived, they made him king over the tribe of Judah, but David did not try to take over the rest of the kingdom of Israel. Even though Saul had tried to kill him for so many years, one of the first things David did as king of Judah was to honor the brave men of Jabesh-Gilead for risking their lives to recover the bodies of Saul and Jonathan. His message to them was, "Blessed are you for showing kindness to your king by burying him. May the Lord show kindness to you, as will I for what you did for Saul." David also informed them that he was now king of Judah and invited them to join him.

While the Philistines did not take any action against David as king over Judah, the kingdom of Saul was not ready to yield to him yet. Saul's military commander, Abner, made Ishbosheth, son of Saul king over the rest of Israel. Abner knew that David had been chosen by God to be the next king, but in his years of loyalty to Saul, Abner had developed a hatred of David. He especially remembered the embarrassing rebuke David gave him for not doing his job of protecting his king when David sneaked into the camp and took Saul's spear and water bottle.

Ishbosheth was weak and had no respect from the people and was only a puppet for the ambition of Abner. And there was civil war between the house of Saul, and the house of David, but David's kingdom grew stronger and Saul's weaker.

Abner was getting tired of supporting the weak and incompetent Ishbosheth, and one day after an argument, he defected to David. He made an agreement with David to make him king over the rest of Israel. But David's commander-in-chief, Joab, was afraid that he would lose his position to Abner who he also hated because his brother Asahel, had been killed by him in battle. Joab arranged a meeting with Abner, and then murdered him in cold blood, to avenge his brother's death.

David was furious and didn't consider the killing just vengeance because Asahel had been killed in battle. But Joab and his brother Abishai were so popular and influential among David's elite warriors that he felt he couldn't give him the punishment he deserved. So, he made sure that everyone knew that he had nothing to do with the murder of Abner by holding a funeral procession worthy of great leaders of the nation. The army led by Joab was at the head of the procession, and David led the mourners immediately after the coffin. His words spoken at the funeral showed his great sadness, at the loss and injustice of the killing: "Why should Abner have died a dishonorable death? You had not been captured, nor put in chains. But you were murdered by wicked men."

All Israel could see that the death of Abner was not pleasing to David, and they respected him more because of that. David made his feelings clear among the advisors and leading men of his court. "Know that a prince and a great man has died today in Israel. But even though I am king, I am not strong enough to punish these sons of Zeruah, because I'm too indebted to them. May the Lord reward the evil person according to his deed."

In the end the kingdom of David was better off without Abner. He was sincere in his offer to David, but it was based on selfishness. He had opposed the Lord's anointed, and then only supported him when he saw that he could not win. Then he placed himself in a position where David would be forced to honor him with a position of greatness. His ambition, and lack of trusting and following the will of God would not have been good for the kingdom of David, or the nation.

When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had been killed, he was filled with fear. Seeing there was no hope for their cause and hoping for a position of honor in the court of David, 2 of Ishbosheth's captains snuck into his room and murdered him in his bed and cut off his head. Then they carried the head to David and boasted that they had killed David's enemy, the son of Saul. Clearly these men were not aware of how David rewarded the man who claimed to kill Saul. David was angry and accused them of murdering an innocent man in his own bed. Then he ordered the two murderous traitors to be killed and buried the head in Abner's tomb.

Now the 11 tribes of Israel that had followed Ishbosheth and Abner, sent leaders to meet with David in Hebron. They said, "We are your relatives, because we are all Israelites. Even when Saul was king, we knew that it was really you who led Israel in battle. We know that God chose you to lead His people, so we have come to ask you to be king over us as well." More than 8,000 priests and Levites and nearly 500,000 people then gathered at Hebron to celebrate the coronation of David as king over all Israel. Sacrifices were offered, and David was anointed with oil by

the high priest. Then he was given a crown and scepter to rule as second in command to God, the true king of Israel. David had waited long and patiently, but now he was receiving the honor that God had promised to him. [2 Samuel 5:10](#) And David became more and more powerful, because the LORD God of Heaven's Armies was with him. [2 Samuel 5:10 NLT](#).

## ***Chapter 70—The Reign of David***

This chapter is based on [2 Samuel 5:6-25](#); [6-7](#); [9-10](#).

One of the first things David did after becoming king over all Israel was to choose a place that would become the capital city of the nation. The place he chose, happened to be the home of Melchizedek, king of Salem, and high priest of God, [[Genesis 14:18](#)] 800 years before. It had elevation which made it easier to defend against invaders. It was on the border between Judah and Benjamin and was not far from Ephraim. But the site and city at this location was a stronghold called Jebus which for hundreds of years had been considered unconquerable. The walls of the stronghold were so tall and strong that the Jebusites said, "the blind and the lame could defend the city" [[2 Samuel 5:6](#)]. But led by Joab, the city was taken, and as a reward for this, he was made commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. The stronghold Jebus was renamed Jerusalem and became the new capital of the nation.

Hiram king of Tyre wanted to become friends with David, and allies with Israel, so he sent ambassadors and builders to build a palace for David at Jerusalem. He also provided cedar wood, and other valuable materials needed for the construction.

With the conquest of Jebus, and the alliance with Tyre, the Philistines decided Israel was getting too strong and needed to be attacked. So, they gathered a large army and set up base camp in the valley of Rephaim, not far from Jerusalem. David and his army gathered in Jerusalem but waited for instructions from God. David asked, "Shall I go attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hand?" And God answered, "Go, and I will definitely deliver the Philistines into your hand." So, David attacked them and defeated them and captured their idols which were useless in defending them against Israel.

So, the Philistines assembled a larger army and again assembled at Rephaim. Instead of assuming he should simply attack the Philistines the same way again, David asked God for instructions again. This time God said, "Do not attack them yet, but circle around behind them, but do not go further than the mulberry trees. When you hear something in the tops of the mulberry trees that sounds like marching, get ready because I will go before you to attack the Philistines." And the armies of the Philistines fell defeated from Gibeon all the way to Gezer. And all the surrounding nations were afraid of David [[1 Chronicles 14:16-17](#)].

David was now firmly established on the throne of Israel, and free from the threat of attack from surrounding nations. So, he decided that he wanted the ark, the symbol of God's presence to be in the capital city of Jerusalem with him. The ark was still at Kirjath-Jearim, where it had been moved after it was returned by the Philistines, before Saul was even king of Israel. David gathered 30,000 leading

men of Israel to make a great celebration, and a festive occasion. The ark was brought out from the home of Abinadab who had been its caretaker, transported in the same way the Philistines had returned it, on a new cart pulled by oxen. There were songs of rejoicing, and shouts of joy, while David and many other musicians played their instruments, and praised God. But when the ark reached Nachon's threshing floor, the oxen stumbled, and afraid the ark would fall, Uzzah reached out to steady the ark, and the instant he touched it, God struck him dead. There was great fear and terror among the people, and David was shocked and wondered why God was so harsh. Not knowing the exact reason for God's displeasure, the ark was taken to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, which was nearby.

Through Moses, God had given specific instructions on how the ark was to be moved. Only the priests, descendants of Aaron, were allowed to touch or look at it. Once it was covered, the sons of Kohath, could carry it on their shoulders using the poles. The descendants of Gershon and Merari could transport the boards, pillars and curtains on ox carts, but never the ark. David, the leaders of Israel, and priests had gathered to do a good and holy work, but they did not obey God's instructions in doing it. God accepted the actions of the Philistines in transporting the ark by ox cart, because there was no way they could have known any different, nor did they even have any Kohathites to carry it. But the Israelites had the writings of Moses but didn't make the effort to study it. Uzzah had dared to touch the symbol of God's presence, and he became an example, and a lesson of the importance of strictly obeying the commands of God.

David was now afraid of the ark and feared that some unconfessed sin of his would bring judgment on him. Obed-Edom nervously accepted the responsibility of carding for the ark, and all Israel watched to see if he would survive. Over time, it became obvious that God was blessing Obed-Edom and his entire household. David saw the blessing that Obed-Edom was getting, and wanted the blessing for himself, the city of Jerusalem, and the whole nation. 3 months after the ark had been left with Obed Edom, David again gathered leaders of the nation at the home of Obed-Edom. The ark was reverently placed on the shoulders of men who were supposed to carry it, and this time, every 6 steps, the entire procession would stop and offer sacrifices to God. Soon, great rejoicing took the place of the nervousness and fear that was present when they started. David even took off his royal robes, and wore just a simple linen garment, like the priests wore, not for the purpose of acting as a priest, but to put aside his royalty. In addition to the singing and dancing, they were accompanied with harps, trumpets, and cymbals.

Some who want to dance in clubs and ballrooms use this story of dancing to justify their actions. But the dancing that took place that day was all about praise,

worship, and thankfulness to God, as opposed the type of dancing that goes along with late night drinking and pleasure seeking that is a tool of Satan.

The type of song that was sung is found in the book of Psalms. [Psalm 24:7](#) Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. <sup>8</sup> Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty; the LORD, invincible in battle. <sup>9</sup> Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. <sup>10</sup> Who is the King of glory? The LORD of Heaven's Armies--he is the King of glory. Interlude [Psalm 24:7-10 NLT](#).

The gates of Jerusalem were thrown open and the procession entered the city. The ark was then placed in the temporary shelter that was prepared for it. Then the king said a prayer and sent everyone home with some food and drink. All the tribes of Israel had been represented in the great procession, and in a way, it was like the sacred part of the coronation of David. He was filled to overflowing with thankfulness to God and was very happy that the symbol of His presence now rested so close to the throne of Israel.

When David returned home, he was met by Michael, who had been watching him from the window of the palace. She thought he had looked ridiculous the way he danced about behind the ark. She must not have seen the big deal about the ark and thought he was behaving in a very un-kingly way. The moment he entered the palace, she greeted him saying, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, dancing around in your underwear in front of the women servants, humiliating yourself shamelessly." David had been so happy to have the ark of God brought close to his palace and didn't concern himself with how he behaved or what people had thought of him. He answered his wife, "It was before the Lord, who chose me over your father's family to rule over Israel, that I danced and humiliated myself. I would be willing to humble myself even more for the Lord, in the sight of the women servants, who would still respect me." Because of her pride, Michael never had a child with David for as long as she lived.

David's love of God, which had been shown by his joy and reverence for the ark left an impression on the people and gave them more interest in the sanctuary service and the worship of God. David composed songs that were used in the worship services, and they were also sung by the people as they traveled to the sanctuary for the annual feasts. The popularity of attending these feasts, and the joyfulness with which God was praised and worshipped, eliminated the worship of idols throughout the nation. The people were reminded of the great things God had done for them in the past and now had good reasons to be excited about His blessing in the present.

Except for the ark, the tabernacle was still at Gibeah, and rather than bringing it to the ark in Jerusalem, David had the idea of building a temple in its place. David had built an amazing palace for his home in the new capital of Jerusalem, and now he thought it was only fitting that the ark should have a permanent home instead of the mobile tent that the sanctuary was. He wanted to build a glorious temple that would show Israel's thankfulness to God, that would really be like a palace for the true King of Israel. He told Nathan about his plan, to which the prophet said, "Go ahead with whatever you are thinking because the Lord is with you."

But that night, God told Nathan, go back and tell David, "This is what Jehovah says, I took you from being a simple shepherd, to being ruler over My people, Israel. I was always with you, and protected you from your enemies, and now I have made your name great on the earth. As for my people Israel, I will plant them in this land, and it will belong to them, and they will not have to move anymore, neither will wicked people treat them the way they have in the past. Now you wanted to build a house for Me, but I will build a house for you, and your descendants will sit on the throne forever. But because you have killed many people, you will not be the one to build a house for Me. You will have a son, who will have peace from all enemies, and his name will be called Solomon, and he will build a house for Me." [[1 Chronicles 22:8-10](#)].

It would have been a great honor for David to build the temple, and it could have been known as the temple that David built, but he accepted the decision of God to allow his son to build the temple. There are few people who are willing to give up their grand plans, even if God says it should be a job for someone else. Few people will gracefully accept the job of only preparing the way for someone else to follow them and complete some great plan. But people who are unwilling to do their part, in preparing the way, may hinder a great work from being accomplished.

When there is a dynasty change in a kingdom, the new king often tries to destroy all potential heirs to the throne. But David and Jonathan had made a promise to each other that they would be kind to each other's families. So far, David had fulfilled his promise, but he wanted to do more. So, he asked, "Is there anyone left who is a descendant of Saul, that I can be kind to for the sake of my friend Jonathan?" He was told that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, who had not been able to walk since an accident he suffered when he was a baby. When Saul was defeated and killed, his nurse was trying to protect him by fleeing from the palace, but she dropped him and broke his feet.

Mephibosheth had been taught from when he was young that David was his enemy and had stolen the kingdom from his father and grandfather. But David now brought him to the palace and welcomed him like an honored guest. Then David

gave him all the private property that had belonged to Saul, including the servants that took care of the land and the home. But David wanted Mephibosheth to live in the palace and eat at the king's table every day. As a result of this, like his father Jonathan, Mephibosheth loved David, and believed God had chosen him to be king.

Now that David was firmly seated on the throne of Israel, most of their enemies stopped trying to attack. They decided it was better to be allies than enemies with Israel. For a time, there was no war in Israel, but eventually it was time for David to put Israel's enemies in their place, so he attacked the Philistines and the Moabites and defeated them, then made them pay tax to Israel. Nahash the Ammonite had been friendly to David when he was on the run from Saul. When Nahash died, David sent ambassadors to Hanun, the son of Nahash, the new king, with a message of sympathy. Nahash had only been friendly to David because they had a common enemy, Saul, the king of Israel. Now that David was king of Israel, the Ammonites were done being friendly and treated the ambassadors badly.

David was genuine in his show of kindness, but Satan influenced the Ammonites with envy and suspicion, to assume the ambassadors were spies. The Ammonites prepared for the war that they knew would come as the result of their actions. They sent 1,000 talents [about 75,000 pounds] of silver to several Syrian kings to hire 32,000 horses, chariots, and fighters. Then the Ammonites and the Syrians assembled for war against Israel [[1 Chronicles 19:6-7](#)].

Led by Joab, Israel crossed the Jordan and marched toward Ammon. As they prepared for battle, Joab inspired the men with these words, "Be of good courage, let us fight bravely for our people, and our cities, and may the Lord do what He chooses, to help us." [[1 Chronicles 19:13](#)]. In the battle, both the Syrians and the Ammonites were defeated and fled from the Israelites.

The next year, the Syrians again made war against Israel, and this time David himself led the Israelite army. And God was with them, and the Syrians from Lebanon all the way to the Euphrates, were completely defeated, and agreed to pay tax to Israel. The war with the Ammonites was also resumed with victories, forcing their retreat and capturing most of the territory formerly held by them. The victories God gave the Israelites from these big wars brought them great glory, land, and wealth. The following are some of David's Psalms celebrating his victories but showing that he knew they were given by God.

[Psalm 18:46](#) The LORD lives! Praise to my Rock! May the God of my salvation be exalted! <sup>47</sup> He is the God who pays back those who harm me; he subdues the nations under me <sup>48</sup> and rescues me from my enemies. You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies; you save me from violent opponents. <sup>49</sup> For this, O

LORD, I will praise you among the nations; I will sing praises to your name.

<sup>50</sup> You give great victories to your king; you show unfailing love to your anointed, to David and all his descendants forever. [Psalm 18:46-50 NLT](#).

[Psalm 33:16](#) The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. <sup>17</sup> Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory--for all its strength, it cannot save you. [Psalm 33:16-17 NLT](#).

[Psalm 44:4](#) You are my King and my God. You command victories for Israel. <sup>5</sup> Only by your power can we push back our enemies; only in your name can we trample our foes. <sup>6</sup> I do not trust in my bow; I do not count on my sword to save me. <sup>7</sup> You are the one who gives us victory over our enemies; you disgrace those who hate us. [Psalm 44:4-7 NLT](#).

[Psalm 20:7](#) Some nations boast of their chariots and horses, but we boast in the name of the LORD our God. [Psalm 20:7 NLT](#).

Israel had finally fulfilled the promise given by God to Abraham and repeated to Moses. [Genesis 15:18](#) So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River -- [Genesis 15:18 NLT](#).

Israel was a great nation that was feared and respected by surrounding nations. King David was also loved and respected by his own people. David honored God and God brought honor to David. But the great success was about to be followed by a terrible mistake.

## *Chapter 71—David's Sin and Repentance*

This chapter is based on [2 Samuel 11-12](#).

The Bible has more to say about the failures and mistakes of men than it does about their great glory and success. Everything good thing that is done by man, and every success is a gift from God. Too much praise can lead a person to forget their dependence on God for their success, and cause them to trust in themselves, leading to failure. The one who tempts us and wants us to fail is stronger and smarter than we are. [Ephesians 6:12](#) For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. [Ephesians 6:12 NLT](#).

Self-confidence, praise of men, and beginning to think he was pretty special, were what prepared the way for David's fall. In other nations, the king was above the law. He could do whatever he wanted, and no one could hold him accountable. Satan knows our weaknesses, and when we are separated from God, our source of strength, he will find a way tempt our sinful nature. Satan is very smart, and he leads a person down a path to destruction in small steps.

The Syrians had been defeated, and the victory over the Ammonites was certain. David had left the conclusion of the fighting to Joab and was relaxing in his palace in Jerusalem. Everything around him reminded him of his success, including all the praise and honor that people heaped on him. In his early life, when he was constantly in danger, he put his trust in God, but now life was easy and comfortable. One day, from his palace, he saw a beautiful woman bathing on the roof of her house, and Satan began to be able to plant thoughts in his mind. This led to David's adultery with Bathsheba, who was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of his bravest and most loyal officers.

When Bathsheba became pregnant, David desperately began trying to cover up his sin. But Uriah's loyalty and honor caused all of David's efforts to hide his sin to fail. Still unwilling to confess his sin, and afraid that Uriah might take revenge on him, David added the sin of murder to try to protect himself from the consequences of his adultery. David convinced himself that if Uriah was killed in battle, as many soldiers are, that he could take Bathsheba to be his wife. Then, he thought no one would suspect anything, and it would protect his life, honor and reputation.

David cruelly made Uriah carry a sealed letter to Joab, which said, "Put Uriah at the front of the most dangerous fighting, and then pull back, leaving him exposed so that he will die." Joab was not above murder himself, and he followed the command of the king and Uriah was killed by the Ammonites. Before his sin with

Bathsheba, David had a spotless record as king. [2 Samuel 8:15](#) So David reigned over all Israel and did what was just and right for all his people. [2 Samuel 8:15 NLT](#). But now, David had used his power and position as king, to order Joab to commit murder. The king of Israel was under the authority of God who was the true king of Israel. If the king's command was a violation of God's law, then obedience to the king would be a sin. Joab had given his loyalty to the king instead of to God and now he was also guilty in the murder of Uriah.

Governments are one of God's ways of keeping order on earth. [Romans 13:1](#) Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. [Romans 13:1 NLT](#). But if the government law would cause us to break the law of God, we should be obedient to God.

After Uriah was killed, Joab sent a messenger to the king with an update of the battle. At the end of the message, the bad news of the death of Uriah was given. Then David sent a message back to Joab saying, "Don't let the death of Uriah upset you too much, because this kind of thing is always possible in war. Just keep up the pressure and win the war."

David let Bathsheba mourn for her husband for the usual number of days, but as soon as she finished, he took her to the palace and made her his wife. Earlier in his life, David's conscience even made him feel bad for stealing a piece of Saul's garment. Now he thought he could enjoy the wife of one of his bravest and most loyal soldiers, whom he had just murdered. Satan has always tempted human beings with the benefits of disobeying God. Unfallen angels, and Adam and Eve fell for his lies, and now he is still convincing people to disobey God. [Proverbs 14:12](#) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death. [Proverbs 14:12 NLT](#). But God in His mercy is always willing to forgive, no matter how bad the sin seems, if the sinner truly repents. And God did not leave David long without sending him a reminder of his sin, so that if he repented, his reign and his life could be saved from complete ruin.

David thought he had gotten away with his sin, but the people were not that dumb, and now God who had chosen him to be king, was dishonored. If it was not punished, all Israel would think they could get away with sin. So, Nathan the prophet was sent to David with a story to prick his conscience. It was a dangerous job to reprove kings and powerful people, but Nathan obeyed God. He told David a story, that would cause him to judge and condemn himself. "Two men lived in the same city. One was rich and the other was poor. The rich man had too many flocks and herds to count, but the poor man had only a single lamb. It ate and drank with the family, and the man loved the lamb and held it in his lap and treated it as one of

his children. One day the rich man had a visitor, but instead of taking one of the many animals from his flock, or herd, he took the poor man's lamb, and killed it, and cooked it for his visitor." David became very angry, and immediately offered his judgment on the case saying, "As the Lord lives, that heartless rich man is worthy of death, but at the very least he should give 4 lambs back to the poor man." [2 [Samuel 12:5-6](#)]. Then Nathan said to David, "You are the rich man. Why have you broken the Commandment of God and done evil in His sight?"

People may succeed in hiding their crimes from others, but nothing is hidden from God. [Hebrews 4:13](#) Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. [Hebrews 4:13 NLT](#). [Matthew 10:26](#) "But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. [Matthew 10:26 NLT](#)."

Then Nathan pronounced this sentence from God on David, "This is what the Lord God of Israel says, I chose you to be king and saved you from Saul. Why have you broken my commandment and done this evil thing? You killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife for yourself. Now the sword will never leave your family in peace, and members from your own family will rebel against you. You took Uriah's wife in secret, but your own wives will be taken from you in full view of everyone." One of the ways this was fulfilled was that because of his guilt, David felt unable to correct and punish his sons for doing evil. This of course had future consequences in their evil deeds and rebellion.

Instead of getting angry and punishing Nathan for accusing him, David was touched and felt guilty for his sin. He bowed down to God and confessed, "I have sinned against You." Every sin is committed against God, even those that affect other people. Because he was king, no person would carry out judgment on David, but God was still his king and did punish him. So, Nathan pronounced the judgment of God against him. "So that this evil deed does not give the enemies of God reason to make fun of Him, the child that was born as a result of your sin will die." This was a sentence that was worse than death. David would much rather have been sentenced to death himself, rather than the child, so he fasted and prayed in humility, begging for the life of the child. God is merciful and had been known to hold back judgment on the wicked when they repented. In this case, David hoped his repentance was sufficient, that God in His mercy would spare the life of the child. But when the child died, David humbly accepted the judgment of God and stopped fasting and weeping and put back on his royal robes and resumed his duties.

Many wonder why this story of a terrible sin by a hero, "a man after God's own heart," is included in the Bible. God Himself, through the prophet Nathan said, "Left unpunished, it would give people reason to make fun of God." But unbelievers have taken what they wanted from this story and mocked God and used it as an excuse to sin. But the full story is not about someone getting away with sin. The Bible is clear that what David did was evil. [2 Samuel 11:27](#) ... But the LORD was displeased with what David had done. [2 Samuel 11:27 NLT](#). The story in the Bible also tells of his repentance, punishment, and consequences. It teaches that no matter how evil a deed is, God is merciful and will forgive, if the sinner truly repents.

The story should be a warning to all that even a person who was called, "a man after God's own heart," could stumble and fall when he lost his connection with and dependence on God. We have no goodness in ourselves, and it is only through the power of God that we can overcome temptation and stay faithful to Him. This power should be used to steer clear of temptation when possible, and not knowingly put us where we will be tempted.

The evidence of David's repentance is well documented in the Psalms.

[Psalm 51:1](#) For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. <sup>2</sup> Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. <sup>3</sup> For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. ... <sup>7</sup> Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup> Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me--now let me rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. <sup>14</sup> Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. [Psalm 51:1-3 - 7-14 NLT](#).

By writing it as a song, David was very public about his repentance. It was something that could be sung at gatherings, and since it was preserved in the Bible, it is there for all future generations. There was no effort to minimize his crime or escape punishment. He prayed not only for forgiveness, but for a pure heart, and he trusted and believed that God forgave him and made him clean. David also realized that offering animal sacrifices was not evidence of his repentance.

[Psalm 51:16](#) You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. [Psalm 51:16-17 NLT](#).

David's sin seemed worse than Saul's, and many think God was unfair in His reaction to them. But there is a lot of evidence that David humbled himself and repented, while Saul always tried to justify his actions. This chapter in the life of David can give hope to sinners, that God is willing to forgive if we confess, repent, and ask for forgiveness. God will never reject true repentance and even offers the strength to do it. [Isaiah 27:5](#) unless they turn to me for help. Let them make peace with me; yes, let them make peace with me." [Isaiah 27:5 NLT](#). [Isaiah 55:7](#) Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously. [Isaiah 55:7 NLT](#).

## *Chapter 72—The Rebellion of Absalom*

This chapter is based on [2 Samuel 13-19](#).

The sentence pronounced by David was to pay back 4 lambs for the one he killed, could mean that 4 of his sons would suffer early deaths. His oldest son Amnon had raped his half-sister, Tamar, but had not been punished. Rape was a crime worthy of death, but on top of that was added the sister relationship which was an additional crime. David's own crime made it very difficult for him to punish his children for similar or related acts. So, after 2 years, Absalom took matters into his own hands to avenge the rape of his sister. He invited all the king's sons to a party at his house, and when they were drunk, he killed Amnon. Then Absalom fled to Talmai, king of Geshur, his father-in-law.

Amnon ultimately got the punishment he deserved, but because of the way it was done, now Absalom was guilty. Feeling that Absalom's crime needed some kind of punishment, but not willing to act, David simply left him in exile. After 2 years, Joab could see that David was missing his son and decided to try to reunite them. He decided to use Nathan's approach and found a wise woman from Tekoa to help him. She came to the king, acting as if she needed his help, and told him her problem. She claimed to be a widow with 2 sons who had fought, and one had accidentally killed the other. The family demanded that the killer must die, but the woman said that if that happened, her dead husband would have no one left to carry on his name. David listened to the story and sympathized with the woman and said he would protect her son.

Then the woman boldly proceeded to give some advice to the king. She said, "Death, like water spilled on the ground cannot be taken back, but God is willing to take back people who have been separated from Him." David understood the meaning, and realized who was behind it, so he told Joab to tell Absalom that he could come home, but not to the palace. In a small way, David was still trying to punish Absalom, who for 2 more years was back home but still banished from the king's court.

The general population believed Absalom had been right in punishing Amnon for his crime and thought of him as a hero rather than a criminal. In addition to this, Absalom was very handsome, and popular with the people. Finally, Joab convinced the king to allow Absalom to return to the palace, but their relationship was still strained. Now Absalom began to use his position as the king's son to travel around the country in a chariot with 50 men attending him. While the king was beginning to enjoy quiet and being alone, Absalom was enjoying popularity with the people. As David aged, he became less ambitious, judged less cases, and

his whole administration accomplished less. This gave Absalom an opportunity as he went around the country talking to people, to tell them how it might be time for the crown to pass down to him. Like a politician, he would talk to the people, he would physically touch them, and kiss them, and tell them they would get justice if he was king. This caused more and more people to be unhappy with David's reign, and more excited about the prospects of Absalom as a young new king. This is how Absalom stole the hearts of the people, but David was unaware that this was happening.

Absalom began to secretly put plans and people in place throughout the country for a revolt to overthrow the king and place him on the throne. Finally, he said to the king, "When I was in exile, I made a vow that if I was restored to the kingdom, I would worship and serve the Lord. Let me go and fulfill the terms of my vow in Hebron." This was a religious act which would look good to the people, and David was impressed to see this devotion to God in his son. But this was actually the signal to all his co-conspirators that the revolt was starting. Absalom left for Hebron with 200 men accompanying him. These men had no idea they were participating in a revolt, and just thought they were doing their jobs, attending the king's son. At Hebron, Absalom met Ahithophel, one of David's chief advisors. His reputation was so good that no one ever questioned his advice. Many other influential people joined the revolt because they had so much confidence in the advice of Ahithophel. The signal to act was triggered and word spread quickly throughout the country that Absalom was now king, and many people gathered around him.

Someone loyal to David quickly went and notified him that Absalom had been planning a rebellion to seize the throne and had just declared himself king. At this very time, he was gathering his military forces to march on Jerusalem to kill the king and take the crown. David had not faced danger like this since his early years and quickly snapped out of his depressed and lazy state. Not wanting blood to be shed in the palace and the beautiful capital city of Jerusalem, David quickly made the decision to leave his palace with people that were still loyal to him, leaving 10 of his concubines to look after the house. This would force people to decide whether they would flee with him or remain in Jerusalem to welcome the new king. David's bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites followed him along with 600 Gittites from Gath, commanded by Ittai. David said to Ittai, "Why are you putting yourself in danger by siding with me? You are not even an Israelite, and you have only recently joined forces with me. Why don't you take your 600 men and go back to the city if you want to continue serving the king of Israel." But faithful Ittai said, "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, my place is with you. If you live, I will serve you and if you die, I will die with you." These

men, Gittites from the city of Gath, had been converted to worshipping Jehovah, and now they stood faithful in God's name with His anointed king. David was humbled and grateful for this loyalty and faith.

After they crossed the brook Kidron, they were met by a large group of Levites, led by Zadok the priest, and with him the ark of the covenant. The people with David thought it would be good for them to have the ark, because it might be seen as a symbol of which side God was on. But in humility, David saw the judgment of God in what was happening to him. He had already lost his first and last sons, and now the sword was not leaving his family in peace. He didn't know if this was God's will or not and felt he didn't have the right to remove the symbol of God's presence from the capital. After all God was still king no matter who reigned on the throne in Jerusalem. So, he told Zadok to take the ark back, and if it was the will of God, he would be reunited with the ark in Jerusalem.

David also said to Zadok, "You are also a prophet called by God to teach the people. So, return to the capital with your son Ahimaaz, and Jonathan, the son of Abiathar. But one thing you can do is to let me know what is happening by sending the boys with news." David was also told that Ahithophel was with Absalom, advising him on what to do, and this only added to his depression. Then David went up the Mount of Olives and removed his shoes, covered his head, and wept.

Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba, and he was getting his revenge for what David had done to his granddaughter. So, David prayed, if it was God's will for him to remain king, that Ahithophel would give bad advice. On the Mount of Olives, David humbly prayed and asked God for mercy, and his prayer seemed to be answered right away. Hushai the Archite, a good friend, and another one of his advisors, found him, and he was in mourning for what had happened. But David saw an opportunity here and asked Hushai to return to Jerusalem and advise Absalom to do something different from what Ahithophel advised.

As David continued his flight, he came to Bahurim, and a relative of Saul named Shimei, the son of Gera started following him. Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him and the people that were with him. He said to David, "Come out, come out, you bloody devil. The Lord is rewarding you for the blood you shed to take the throne from the house of Saul. Now God is giving the kingdom to your son Absalom, because you have done evil, and are a bloody man." Of course, Shimei's accusations against David were false, because he never harmed Saul, even when he had the opportunity to do so. Finally, Abishai got tired of listening to Shimei's cursing, lies, and insults, and said to David, "Why should this dead dog curse the king? Let me go and cut off his head." But David answered, "No! My son is even trying to kill me. How much more does this relative of Saul have a reason

to hate me. Let him continue, maybe God told him to come out and curse me. Or maybe God will see that I am patiently taking this abuse and reward me later because of it." David's loyal supporters were saddened to see these terrible things happen to him, but he could see how they were consequences for his sin and humbly accepted it. These words written by the prophet Micah reflected his feelings. [Micah 7:9](#) I will be patient as the LORD punishes me, for I have sinned against him. But after that, he will take up my case and give me justice for all I have suffered from my enemies. The LORD will bring me into the light, and I will see his righteousness. [Micah 7:9 NLT](#). Many people have excused or not seen their sins as being so bad because they compare them to David's adultery and murder, but they fail to match the sincerity of his repentance.

David loved God, and as king he had faithfully done his duty, bringing great honor to God's name. For years now, David had been accumulating gold, silver, and precious stones for the house of God that was to be built by his son. But he knew that Absalom did not love or honor God and cared more for his own wealth and power than even the good of the nation. He wondered if God was going to allow all that material to be wasted, and hoarded by Absalom, or if God would somehow bring him back to the throne of Israel.

This example from the life of David should show us that God is a God of great mercy and forgiveness, but forgiveness does not take away consequences. If David had simply been forgiven and continued his reign as if nothing had happened, many people would have used it as a reason to reject religion and the Bible. The Bible teaches that God hates sin, and doesn't justify it, or excuse it. Sin must have consequences, whether they are natural or whether God imposes them. [Psalm 89:31](#) if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, <sup>32</sup> then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating. <sup>33</sup> But I will never stop loving him nor fail to keep my promise to him. [Psalm 89:31-33 NLT](#).

Absalom and his army swept into Jerusalem without any resistance, and David's friend and advisor Hushai was one of the first to welcome the new king. Absalom was surprised and now even more sure that he would succeed. Absalom's army was large, but they were mostly untrained and inexperienced. On the other hand, David and his faithful followers were few, but very experienced warriors. Ahithophel now thought to himself that if the rebellion failed, David might forgive Absalom, but he would be held responsible and would be executed. So, he decided to advise Absalom to do something which would leave him no possibility of reconciliation. When a king was conquered, it was common for the new king to take the former king's wives for himself. Ahithophel now advised Absalom not only to do this with David's concubines, but to do it in public for everyone to see. This fulfilled what God said would happen to David, [2 Samuel 12:11](#) "This is what the

LORD says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. <sup>12</sup> You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel." [2 Samuel 12:11-12 NLT](#). God did not cause these people to take these evil actions, but He saw that they would.

Ahithophel's advice to Absalom was a violation of God's law, which showed that while he may have been smart, he was lacking Godly wisdom. [Proverbs 9:10](#) Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. [Proverbs 9:10 NLT](#). [Proverbs 1:30](#) They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way, choking on their own schemes. <sup>32</sup> For simpletons turn away from me--to death. Fools are destroyed by their own complacency. [Proverbs 1:30-32 NLT](#).

Ahithophel now suggested to Absalom what he should do next. "Let me now choose 12,000 men and go after your father tonight. While he is still weary and disorganized, I will only kill the king and bring the people back to you." This was good advice and would likely have succeeded, but Absalom's success was not part of God's plan, and Hushai would now play his part in defeating Ahithophel's advice. Absalom called Hushai to ask what he thought about the plan. He knew it was a good plan, and in order to defeat it he said, "The counsel of Ahithophel is not good in this situation. You know that your father and the men with him are highly experienced, mighty warriors, and they are angry, like a mother bear robbed of her cubs. Probably your father is hidden somewhere, and you might not even be able to find him when you attack his people. Then if you come back without evidence that you have defeated the king, you may lose support for your cause." Then Hushai gave some advice that he knew would be appealing to the proud, power hungry, young man. "I suggest that you gather an army from all Israel that is so large that the number of men will be like the sand on the seashore. Then you should personally command and lead this army against your father, and you will completely overwhelm and cover them like dew that covers the ground. Every single one of them should be killed, and if they hide in a city, the entire city should be dragged stone by stone into the river until nothing is left of it."

Then Absalom's advisors liked Hushai's counsel better than Ahithophel's. But Ahithophel knew that it would fail, and he knew that David would learn about his role in the rebellion, so he put his house in order and hanged himself. That was the end of an advisor who did not get his wisdom from God.

Hushai could not be certain of what Absalom would eventually do, so he sent a secret message to the priests, so that their sons could carry the news to David. The

message contained the 2 suggestions given by Ahithophel, and Hushai, and the advice of Hushai that David should not stay where he was that night, but cross the river, in case the advice of Ahithophel was followed. The messengers, Ahimaaz and Jonathan were suspected as spies and chased, but they were helped and got away with their message. When David received the message, it had already been a long and tiresome day, but now he must cross the Jordan River, because his son was planning to kill him. At this time of despair David was inspired with the words of this Psalm:

[Psalm 3:1](#) A psalm of David, regarding the time David fled from his son Absalom. O LORD, I have so many enemies; so many are against me. <sup>2</sup> So many are saying, "God will never rescue him!" Interlude <sup>3</sup> But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high. <sup>4</sup> I cried out to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy mountain. Interlude <sup>5</sup> I lay down and slept, yet I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me. <sup>6</sup> I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side. <sup>7</sup> Arise, O LORD! Rescue me, my God! Slap all my enemies in the face! Shatter the teeth of the wicked! <sup>8</sup> Victory comes from you, O LORD. May you bless your people. Interlude [Psalm 3:1-8 NLT](#).

By morning everyone with David, including the elderly, women, and children, had all crossed the river, and they went to Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth had reigned from. It was a city with strong walls, and surrounded by mountains, making it a good place to retreat to. The local people were friendly to David and brought him food and supplies.

Absalom was anxious to go after his father, and when the men of Israel were gathered, he made Amasa, the son of David's sister Abigail, his commander-in-chief of the army. He had many men, but they were untrained, and unready to fight against the smaller but experienced forces that were with his father. David divided his men into three groups under the command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. He had wanted to lead his men into battle himself, but the men said no, your life is more valuable than 10,000 of us. But you can be ready to come out of the city to save us if necessary.

David was able to see the battle lines from the city wall, and his biggest concern, over that of his crown, his kingdom, and even his own life, was the life of his son. He had told his men to spare the life of his son, and it seemed to them that he cared more for the rebel, than even those who risked their lives for him. The battle took place in the woods, where a large army was not an advantage, and 20,000 men of Israel were killed by the servants of David that day. Seeing that the battle was lost, Absalom was fleeing on his mule when his long hair got tangled in the branches of

a tree, and he was left dangling in midair. One of David's men saw it and told Joab about it. Twice, Joab had tried to reconcile David and Absalom, and now he felt betrayed and somewhat responsible for the horrors of this rebellion. In spite of David's request, Joab killed Absalom with 3 darts and threw his body in a pit and covered it with a great pile of stones. With Absalom dead, Joab used the trumpet to recall the men from pursuing the rebel army. Then runners were sent with news for the king.

Back in Mahanaim, David waited anxiously for news from the battle. Finally, the watchman on the wall spotted a lone runner, and then a second. He called out, "I think the first runner looks like Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a good man, so he must have good news." When Ahimaaz arrived, he bowed down to the king and said, "All is well. Blessed be the Lord your God, that defeated those who rebelled against my lord the king." David said, "Yes, yes, yes, but what about Absalom? Is he alive?" But Ahimaaz had no clear answer to that question.

Then the second messenger arrived, and said, "My king, the Lord has provided revenge on those that rebelled against you." And David said, "Yes, but what about Absalom? Is he safe?" Then the messenger said, "The enemies of my lord the king that rose up against you are as that young man is." David understood the meaning and went up to his room on the wall and wept, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. I wish I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son."

The loyal friends and supporters of David soon arrived with shouts of victory, but the king was not there at the gate to welcome them. Instead, they heard the loud cries of the king above the gate they entered saying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. I wish I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son." So, the victory was turned to mourning, and the soldiers sneaked away as if they had lost or had fled from the battle.

Joab angrily barged into the room where David was wailing, and said, "What are you doing? You are making your loyal servants, who risked their lives to save your life and the lives of your sons and daughters feel like they did something wrong. I suppose if all of us had died today, and Absalom had lived you would be happy! I swear that if you don't get down there immediately and thank them, you will be alone by the end of the day." David knew that Joab was right and went and did as he suggested. Then the soldiers all came back from hiding and marched past him and received their gratitude from him.

## *Chapter 73—The Last Years of David*

This chapter is based on [2 Samuel 24](#); [1 Kings 1](#); [1 Chronicles 21, 28-29](#).

The death of Absalom did not immediately result in peace and David being restored to the throne. So many people had joined the rebellion that David did not automatically assume he was wanted back as king. Finally, the tribe of Judah asked David to come back as their king, which made the other tribes jealous, and started another rebellion. But this was quickly resolved, and the nation of Israel was at peace again with David on the throne.

Most people would love to have both wealth and power, but few realize how dangerous they can be to your relationship with God and your eternal life. David was better prepared than most for these things, by his humble hardworking early life as a shepherd. During this time, he developed a strong relationship with God, and a deep love and respect for Him and His law. David got a front row seat to see the sad effect of riches and power on the life of Saul, knowing that those dangers awaited him. Yet with all this preparation, David was still overcome with temptation and sin.

God wanted Israel to be admired and honored among the nations, but not necessarily in the way that most nations measure greatness. By the blessings of God, David had great success as king of Israel, and now he wanted to increase his greatness, by assembling a bigger army, which would allow him to conquer more nations. The Bible says that Satan provoked David to number Israel. Counting the Israelites was a way for him to know how many military age men were available and allowed him to know who and where they were so he could draft them into his army.

Tracking the population had always been done by the priests when couples came to dedicate and pay the ransom for their sons according to the law. But in this case, David ordered the military to conduct this census, and this was very unusual, and the people were not happy with it. Even Joab, the man who was willing to commit murder to keep his high position in the military felt this was wrong. When ordered by David to conduct this census, Joab said to David, "God could increase the population by 100 times, and they would all be your subjects, so why would you sin by counting Israel this way?" But David ordered him to do it anyway, so Joab followed the order of his king. Even before the count was finished, David felt guilty, and knew he had sinned. The next day, he got a message from the prophet Gad which was, "You must choose 1 of 3 options to be the punishment for your sin: 3 years of famine; 3 months of losing battles to enemies; 3 days of the angel of destruction causing deadly disease in the land."

David said, "This is a terrible choice for me to have to make, but I would rather receive punishment directly from God, rather than suffering defeat at the hands of men, so I will choose the third option." After 70,000 people had died from the pestilence, it hadn't even reached Jerusalem yet. Then David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord in the air with his sword pointed at Jerusalem. And David pleaded with God in prayer saying, "It was me that sinned by counting the people. They haven't done anything. So let the plague be on my family and not on them." Though David was right, realizing that his action was a sin, the people were not innocent. So, even as David suffered consequences of his sin through Absalom's actions, the people were punished because of David's action.

As the angel hovered over Mount Moriah, a prophet told David to offer a sacrifice on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. David did as he was told and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on an altar to the Lord, then the plague stopped. The very spot where David built the altar was treated as holy ground, and Ornan freely offered to give it up, but David said, "I will not offer a sacrifice to God that cost me nothing, but I will buy it from you for the full price." So, David paid Ornan 600 shekels [about 15 pounds] of gold for the property. In fact, this very spot was where Abraham had built his altar to sacrifice his son and would be the future site of the temple that Solomon would build.

One more incident would darken the reign of David in the last year of his life. He was 70 years old, and though his mind was clear, his body was failing him. In the seclusion of his last years, David had little knowledge of what was happening in the kingdom. This time, Adonijah, another of David's sons, decided that he should be the one to inherit the throne from his father. Like Absalom, Adonijah was very handsome, but he was also never disciplined when he was young. David had never even once asked him, "Why have you done this or that." He knew that God had chosen his younger brother Solomon, to be the next king, but he decided to take the throne while the weak and aged king was still on it. I'm sure Joab knew he was out of favor with David, so he joined Adonijah's rebellion, as did Abiathar the priest. A great feast was thrown to celebrate the new king, but Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Bathsheba the mother of Solomon went to David to let him know what was happening. David realized that if he didn't immediately crown Solomon as the next king, as soon as Adonijah had an opportunity, he would kill his rivals to the throne. So, on the order of David, Solomon was quickly anointed and declared king and was seated on the throne of his father.

Adonijah's rebellion quickly fell apart and the people at his feast all fled for their lives. Solomon did not immediately punish Adonijah but would later find a reason to put him to death. Adonijah's death completed the 4-fold judgment David pronounced on himself for his sin. Abiathar the priest was demoted, and the

position of high priest was transferred to Zadok and his descendants. Joab was executed for his part in the rebellion, but also because of the innocent people he had murdered earlier in his life.

One of David's greatest desires in his early reign was to build a temple for the Lord. Since God had not allowed him to have this privilege, he had planned for it and gathered all the material for it which included: gold, silver, all kinds of precious stones, marble, and even precious wood. Now that he felt his end was very near, he wanted to publicly give the job of building the temple to his son. David was extremely weak, but the Spirit of God came upon him and strengthened him for this last public address to the people. First, he said to the people, "Search and study the commandments of God, and keep them so that you will keep living in this land and be able to pass it on to your children and their descendants forever." Then to Solomon he said, "Get to know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart, and do it willingly. God knows all the thoughts of everyone's heart, and if you search for Him, you will find Him, but if you leave Him, He will leave you. Now, know that the Lord has chosen you personally to build a house to replace the sanctuary, so be strong and do it." The detailed plans of the temple had been inspired by God, and now they were given to Solomon. Solomon was young and afraid to take on such a great responsibility, but David assured him with these words, "Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, or worried, for my God will be with you, and He will not fail you or forsake you."

Then he said to the people, "Solomon my son has been chosen by God, but he is young, and the job is very great, because he is not building a house for man, but for the Lord your God. I have done what I could to prepare for this great work, and I have personally given 112 tons of gold and 262 tons of silver for this work. Now whoever would like to willingly contribute to this great work can also participate by bringing your gifts to the Lord." And the people brought 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of brass, 3,750 tons of iron, and many precious stones [[1 Chronicles 29:4-7](#)].

Then David said this prayer over the people, "Blessed are You Lord God of Israel forever and ever. Greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty are Yours. Everything on earth and in the sky is Yours. You are the absolute ruler of all things. You can give greatness and strength to whoever You want. We thank You and praise Your glorious name. How is it that I, and Your chosen people, who are so small and powerless compared to You can give You anything? In fact, everything we have is already Yours. Our lives on this earth are so short, we come and go, and nothing lasts for long. This material that we have gathered to build a house to honor Your holy name, already belongs to You. And small as we are, I know that You look into our hearts and are pleased when You find faithfulness and

honesty. As for me, I have gladly donated these materials, and I have seen the people also joyfully donate as well. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and our fathers, keep this spirit that right now exists in your people alive in their hearts. Finally, help my son Solomon to have a perfect heart toward You and Your commandments. Help him to keep all your laws and to complete this temple according to plan."

We should all remember as David prayed, that every good thing we have comes from God. Often, these things are placed in our hands to test our love for God, to see if we will offer them back to Him, and whether we will acknowledge that they came from Him.

Now, as David felt the end was very near, he said to Solomon, "Soon, I will be going where everyone on earth goes. Be strong, show you are a man, by completing the job that has been given to you, and by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in His ways. If you do this, you will succeed in everything you do, and if you and your children always follow the Lord, He will keep His promise to me, that as long as your descendants obey Him, the throne of Israel will remain in the family." [[1 Kings 2:1-4](#)].

The last words of David are a song of trust and faith: [2 Samuel 23:1](#) These are the last words of David: "David, the son of Jesse, speaks--David, the man who was raised up so high, David, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. <sup>2</sup> "The Spirit of the LORD speaks through me; his words are upon my tongue. <sup>3</sup> The God of Israel spoke. The Rock of Israel said to me: 'The one who rules righteously, who rules in the fear of God, <sup>4</sup> is like the light of morning at sunrise, like a morning without clouds, like the gleaming of the sun on new grass after rain.' <sup>5</sup> "Is it not my family God has chosen? Yes, he has made an everlasting covenant with me. His agreement is arranged and guaranteed in every detail. He will ensure my safety and success. [2 Samuel 23:1-5 NLT](#).

David had sinned greatly, and his repentance was deep, and genuine. Because he was forgiven for so much, he loved God very much. This principle was spoken by Jesus when He said, [Luke 7:47](#) "I tell you, her sins--and they are many--have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." [Luke 7:47 NLT](#).

The Psalms that David wrote take us through the whole range of emotions from the deepest guilt to the highest faith. His life is an example of the shame that sin should cause, but also the depths to which the mercy and love of God will reach to bring the sinner to repentance. The life of man is short, but the promises of God last forever. The mercy of Jehovah has no end for those that fear Him, and His

goodness reaches to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of those that keep His commandments. [[Job 14:2](#); [Isaiah 40:8](#); [Psalm 103:17-18](#)].

Go made promises to David that He kept even though the descendants of David disobeyed His commandments. This promise was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus as a descendant of David.

[Psalm 72:4](#) Help him to defend the poor, to rescue the children of the needy, and to crush their oppressors. <sup>5</sup> May they fear you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon remains in the sky. Yes, forever! <sup>6</sup> May the king's rule be refreshing like spring rain on freshly cut grass, like the showers that water the earth. <sup>7</sup> May all the godly flourish during his reign. May there be abundant prosperity until the moon is no more. <sup>8</sup> May he reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. [Psalm 72:4-8 NLT](#).

[Psalm 72:17](#) May the king's name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun shines. May all nations be blessed through him and bring him praise. [Psalm 72:17 NLT](#).

[Isaiah 9:6](#) For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [Isaiah 9:6 NLT](#).

[Luke 1:32](#) He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. [Luke 1:32-33 NLT](#).