



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of Exodus

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

chapter	page
1:1 – 4:31	2
5:1 - 11:10	5
12:1 – 18:27	8
19:1 – 20:16	11
Special Study	14
21:1 – 23:33	20
24:1 – 31:18	23
32:1 – 34:35	27
35:1- 40:38	31
bio	34

EXODUS 1:1---4:31

The Egyptians were not afraid **of** the Israelites. They were afraid the Israelites would “up and leave” Goshen. That would leave the Egyptians without anyone to exploit as “slaves.” The world has always been against the church of God! The church must face reality! The world is not a friend of God! All the world wants from the church is to exploit it. The world also hates the people of God because the church’s holiness and other-worldly-mindedness stands as a judgment and *expose* of what the world is all about. It is one thing for God’s people to be willing and active in serving mankind—it is quite another thing for the church to be passive when the world is exploiting it. The church must be vocal about the will of God when the world tries to take advantage of it. The church must proclaim the judgment of God upon such actions. That is exactly why God sent Moses to Pharaoh! This is proclamation mandate is in the NT as well (Acts, Revelation, Epistles of Paul).

We are not certain whether the “midwives” were Egyptians sympathetic to the Hebrews or whether they were Israelites.. Whatever the case, they deliberately chose to disobey the king’s command. The Bible stands for obedience to properly constituted human ordinances and governments. But the Bible also clearly teaches that when the choice is between obeying a command of God that is clearly in opposition to human ordinances, the believer must obey God (Dan. 3:18; Acts 5:29). Whether the lying of the Egyptian “midwives” to the king of Egypt was right or not, it is difficult to make any black-and-white categorizations. While truth is worth dying for *personally*, is it always right to forfeit the lives of others in the place of absolute truth? Aren’t there sometimes when believers must decide that certain evil and wicked persons have no right to know the truth? I think there are! I think the Bible exemplifies such times (Josh. 2:1-24; 8:1-9). There were even times when Jesus did not give all the truth he had to certain people (even to his own disciples). The protection of the unalienable rights of human beings (life, liberty, and proprietorship) could not be protected against wicked predators if the police and military could not use **deception** in **enforcement** strategies. We carp at the midwives and exalt those who lied to the Germans to save the Jews (1930-1945). There has to be a “hierarchy” of ethics so long as this wicked world exists. The Sermon on the Mount is *ideal* and is for the kingdom of God only. The law (1 Tim. 1:8 and Rom. 13:1-7) and the coercion powers of civil government is for dealing with the wicked world. If all the world were the kingdom of God and men were trustworthy (if their “yeas were Yea, and their nays were Nay”) then we could deal with everyone as in Matthew 5-6-7; but the reality is quite different. A recent classic case is Commander Bucher and the North Koreans; or even our former President Bill Clinton and his wife!

Moses killed the Egyptian because the Egyptian was **illegally abusing and endangering the life** of another human being (all life is sacred to God). He also did it hoping to incite the Israelites to follow his lead in deliverance from Egyptian slavery which is also unjust and against the will of God. Moses would be the instrument of God in much worse calamities upon the Egyptians later. Here God had recently told him he was to be the leader in deliverance. Deliverance has to start somewhere—Moses thought, “Let it be here, let it be me!” But the Israelites were not to be moved toward deliverance just yet. That is a rather amazing thought! They apparently were willing to passively suffer their extreme and abject slavery and oppression rather than get involved in all the sacrifices they would have to make to be delivered. There are lots of people today turning down the deliverance of God in Christ because they don’t want to be inconvenienced. They don’t want to give up the

false securities of the world for a short time in order to have the *certain* securities of heaven forever. One “security” you can see and touch, the other you have to “see” by faith—it’s the old “bird in the hand” syndrome!

Moses did not necessarily please the Lord by marrying the Midianite. Midianites were related to the Jews through Abraham and Keturah (Arabians). Zipporah was not loyal enough to the Abrahamic Covenant to have her son circumcised. Moses sent her back to her father’s house when he went back to Egypt to lead Israel out. She does not appear to be very sympathetic to Moses and his cause. God wants believers to marry believers (1 Cor. 7:1-40; 2 Cor. 6:1—7:1, etc.). But God allows human beings to make their choices and live with the results. Moses might have fared better with a Hebrew wife. God definitely specified to his covenant people they should not marry foreigners (pagans) and when they did they suffered the contaminations of idolatry, sin, and paganism.

God delivered Israel because he promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan (Acts 7:1-8)—**and God keeps his promises!** God delivered Israel for the purpose of worshiping him! God delivered Israel for the purpose of serving him (Ex. 4:23). God delivered Israel because he cared about their affliction and had mercy on them. Those are still the goals of God’s delivering human beings from the bondage of sin today. Ultimately that is God’s goal for delivering those who accept his salvation for eternity. For the sake of his name he delivers (see Ezek. 20:9,22; Dan. 9:17ff). God’s name must be kept inviolate, sovereign, faithful, and holy. **GOD DOES THIS BY KEEPING HIS PROMISES!** If God promises anything, at any time, to any one—**IT IS SURE TO COME TO PASS, IN PRECISELY THE WAY AND IN THE TIME HE HAS PROMISED IT!**

God is *YHWH!* Those four consonants in the Hebrew language are called “The Tetragrammaton” (i.e., The Four Letters). The earliest Hebrew language did not have vowels—only consonants. Later, perhaps during the exile in Babylon, scribes affixed vowel “pointing” to Hebrew words as these vowels had been pronounced verbally for centuries and “handed down” from one generation to another. Thus *YHWH* became *YEHOWAH*, or *JEHOVAH* as we pronounce it today. The word *YHWH* means, “I AM.” Some have said *JEHOVAH* is to be especially associated with the **covenant-keeping-God**, as *ELOHIM* is associated with the creating-God, and *ADONAI* is associated with the victorious-Lord-God. All three of those words are used in the OT and translated, “Lord,” and “God.” Whatever the case, the main point is the eternalness and almightiness of the God of Moses. He ***IS*** (present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is no invention of man. He is and always has been and always will be—the Alpha and the Omega. Therefore, he is God of all! Jesus used the phrase “***I Am***” to speak of himself (Jn. 8:58), and the Jews understood him to be claiming to be Jehovah in the flesh. That is precisely what he was claiming! God proved to Pharaoh, Moses and Israel that he is “***I Am***” in the plagues and the exodus!

It was right for God to tell the Hebrews to take jewelry from the Egyptians because whatever God commands is right! He told Joshua to deceive the people of Ai and wipe them out, man, woman and child! He told Abraham to sacrifice his son! He told Hosea to marry a woman of harlotry! He told Jesus, who did not deserve it, to willingly give his life on an unjust cross as a vicarious atonement for your sin and mine, and more than that, God is just! The Hebrews **deserved** some **payment** for their slavery in Egypt. He is the same God who said, “The laborer is worthy of his hire—do not muzzle the ox when he is treading the grain.” God gave the Israelites the “plunder” of war many times. Abraham took “plunder” from the kings of the east and gave a tenth of it to Melchizedek, the great high priest of God. The Egyptians were glad to give the Hebrews what they asked (Ex. 12:35-36), for they knew

the Hebrews could have done much worse damage to their land than they did!

Moses was fearful the people would not listen to him because of past experience and because of his fear of personal inadequacies. God is patient. Moses turned out to be a man of great faith (Heb. 11:23-28) and of service to God and mankind. But God will not be satisfied with excuses when he gives orders! God never gives an order that he knows is impossible for us to fulfill. God, himself, in the flesh, has gone every place, and done everything he asks us to do and go! God supplies power and circumstances to overcome whatever inadequacies men and women have when he asks what seems to be **impossible**. It is almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

Moses disagreed with God about his abilities for the same reason we disagree with God—a lack of faith! Disagreeing with God is not humility—it is unbelief. If God says we can, we can! Many disagreed with Jesus when he challenged them (even those who had walked and talked with him and had seen his miracles). Cases in point—the 5000 fed miraculously with bread and fish; Peter walking on the water; the leper saying, “If you will, you can make me clean” (Mk. 1:40ff); the rich, young, ruler. Jesus simply assumes that every Christian can win an unbeliever to faith. Jesus simply says, “Go, and make disciples.” To disagree with that is not humility—it is cowardly unbelief. Jesus assumes every believer is able to give something of material possession to the Lord’s work. Disagreeing with God is unbelief! Sometimes we think only in terms of big, impossible things, while all God wants us to do are the small, possible things!

God almost killed Moses because Moses forgot the covenant! Indifference and neglect of God’s precious promises and covenant, which is really contempt, makes God feel like you feel when your love is spurned! Divine love demands total concentration! Infinite mercy cannot tolerate indifference! If God tolerated indifference his mercy would not be infinite. The death of Jesus Christ satisfied infinite wrath on Israelite’s indifference and neglect and contempt of covenant relationship with God. If God is so displeased with indifference of the OT saints, think what his feelings must be toward indifferent Christians today! **THINK WHAT HIS FEELINGS MUST BE TOWARD MILITANT UNBELIEVERS AND REBELS TODAY! THEN THINK WHAT BLESSEDNESS HIS GRACE IS TOWARD BELIEVING PENITENTS!**

In addition to all his preparation, Moses needed **faith** to become a deliverer of God’s people. Moses had to have faith strong enough to turn away from all the riches and sinful pleasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26). To repent requires faith. It is through faith that repentance is produced. Let us never forget that! Any congregation involving itself in a program of teaching the Bible so as to bring people to greater faith will be involved in bringing believers to repentance. Moses had to have faith strong enough to turn toward God’s will, leave Egypt, and keep the Passover (Heb. 11:23-28). Turning away from sin does not always result in someone turning to God’s will. It takes a living faith to turn toward and do God’s will. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed (which, though small, is alive) no obstacle can stand in the way of our doing God’s will!

EXODUS 5:1—11:10

Pharaoh **first** set his mind against allowing the Hebrews to leave Egypt because it came as a challenge to his *supposed* divinity. Pharaohs were held by themselves and their subjects to be gods. He said, “Who is the Lord, that I should heed his voice and let Israel go?” This attitude toward the sovereignty of Almighty God is still prevalent in the world today. Many rules and human authorities still say, today, “Who is the God of the Bible that we should listen to him?” Communist countries, predominantly Roman Catholic countries, Islamic countries, modern Israel, and American and other “western” societies are cowed by the secular atheists and activists. **Secondly**, Pharaoh opposed the worship of Jehovah by the Hebrews on the excuse that they were trying to shirk their duties as his slaves! That attitude is also prevalent in the big-business and big-government promoters in today’s world. There are many employers who oppose the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ because “it is not good business.” Some imply “Christians are bums and parasites..” etc. It may be that some who claim to be worshipers of God are lazy bums, but laziness is certainly not taught in the Scriptures! And no true follower of the Lord will exploit his employer (while no true employer will exploit his workers, as Pharaoh did, either, see Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25)! Pharaoh found out who the Lord was! And eventually so will all who oppose him now!

The **first** reaction of the Hebrew foremen was to object to Pharaoh that they could not fulfill his demands since it was his Egyptian people who would not give them straw with which to make the bricks. This was correct. But it had no effect upon Pharaoh. He cruelly refused to relent and insisted on increasing their burden. The **second** reaction of the Hebrew foremen was to put the blame on Moses and Aaron. First they called down a curse of judgment upon Moses. Second, they blamed Moses and Aaron for Pharaoh’s attitude toward the Hebrews. But that was unjust since Pharaoh’s attitude toward them was established long before Moses and Aaron came on the scene. **Third**, they blamed Moses and Aaron for “putting a sword in the hands of the Egyptians to kill them.” That also was unjust since Moses had earlier, himself, slain an Egyptian who had been beating to death one of their countrymen! So, the Hebrews did nothing! Moses found himself in a “no win” situation with the people of God—and he isn’t the first or last servant of God on that spot! Every servant of God is going to find opposition from the world and from “false brethren.” Moses turned to the Lord (in prayer) and laid the burden there. The Lord promised to take care of the problem in his own good time, and in his own good way!

God iterates his promises over and over and over, because man is weak and needs reassuring! Adults are not as wise and self-sufficient as they think they are. They are, in reality, **children**. When it comes to the crucial, cosmic issues of existence, life, purpose, death, conscience, judgment, etc. **adults are really children!** They are weak, vulnerable, ignorant, totally dependent, needing constant reassurance and care. **So God cares!** He reassures (read Hebrews 6:13-20). 1st and 2nd Peter reminds, repeats, and stirs up the mind constantly. Jesus had to repeat promises to the apostles over and over and over. God repeated his covenant promises over and over and over through the prophets of the OT. And the very purpose of giving the genealogy of Moses is to reassure Moses and the Israelites of God’s providential sustaining of his promises of the redemption of mankind. God keeps his promises in spite of any and all opposition—even in spite of death! And even after all the reassuring of God, and the miraculous signs given, Moses weakens and says, “How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, who am a man of uncircumcised (i.e., unclean) lips?” Moses was still afraid of failure. But God did not send Moses to succeed with Pharaoh—

only to try! Pharaoh did not listen! Moses was sent simply to deliver the message of the will of God to Pharaoh. In this is success! In this there is no such thing as inadequacy—no such thing as “incapable.” Every believer is capable of speaking the word of God (or communicating it in some manner).

It is possible to see miracles, and still harden one’s heart against God’s message and messenger. Pharaoh did it! The Pharisees in Jesus’ day did it! Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar did! King Agrippa did (Acts 26:26ff). The Jewish priests did (Acts 4:16)! Miracles were never intended to convert people. Miracles only confirm that the message of the prophets and apostles is the word of God. It is the **word** of God that has the power to convert (2 Cor. 5:14-21). Once the word is confirmed by miracles, the miracles have served their purpose and are no longer needed. The word had been confirmed (Jn. 20:30-31; Heb. 2:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 1 Jn. 1:1-4). Miracles are not needed today. Those who insist on having them or working them are in contradiction to God’s word! Paul indicates that the mania for miracles is a sure sign of spiritual immaturity (1 Cor. chs. 12-14). I believe the mania for miracles is also a sure sign of the hardening of the heart against the clear, simple, truth of God revealed in the propositional language of the Bible. Why? What *reason* does the mind demand for extra-Biblical revelation from God? None that is reasonable!

God evidently chose to “plague” (or judge) the Egyptians through the physical effects he used in order to attack the Egyptians at the point where they were the most vulnerable. Most of these physical things had been **deified** by the Egyptians. They worshiped them as **gods**. They had put their trust in them as being **invulnerable, immutable, inviolate**. No invented or pretended supremacy shall stand before Jehovah. Every human or so-called “god must eventually bow before Jehovah. All of creation, everything that exists, is subject to him. Everything upon which man is totally dependent for life is subject to Jehovah! God continues to demonstrate this through the things that have been made which show his wrath on wickedness, and in his subjecting all creation to futility (see Rom. 1:18-32; 8:18-25). God has even attacked (through human scientists) the false “god” called “uniformitarianism” better known as the “theory” of evolution. It is now well accepted scientific fact that our universe is so complex that it must have had a Designer! (See 2 Pet. 3:5). God was also showing that he could protect those who belonged to him from anything—even from the greatest Pharaoh and from death!

I do not believe the “magicians” of Pharaoh worked miracles! Certainly Pharaoh seemed satisfied with them. But there are many today satisfied with **alleged** miracles all the way from prophesying to raising the dead. This is because they **want** such verification, **not** because the miracles can be established on the same criteria as those in the Bible. If the magicians had worked the same miracles as Moses and Aaron, how was Moses to keep from believing in the magicians, or giving up and refusing to go before Pharaoh again? Please study the **special notes** on “Questions About Whether the Devil Can Actually Perform Supernatural Deeds, or Not,” in P. T. Butler’s commentary *Twenty-Six Lessons on Revelation, Part II*, published by College Press 1982, paperback, pp. 241-245. How was Israel to follow Moses instead of the magicians? The Egyptians did their “miracles” by sleight of hand or hypnosis. The signs and wonders of the devil are called “pseudo” signs (i.e., pretended, false) in 2 Thess. 2:9-12.

As many as 7 times, at least, Pharaoh said he would let the Israelites go and serve or worship their God. Of course, Pharaoh always insisted on some compromise from Moses. He never agreed to let them go completely free, with no conditions. He always reserved some authority or hold over them. But the obstinacy of Pharaoh is clearly revealed

in the fact that he reneged on every promise (even conditional) that he made. He also reneged on every “confession” of sin he made. Clearly, he never intended from the very start to surrender completely to Jehovah. What a fearful warning to each of us not to try to reserve in our own hearts any little “thrones” of self-supremacy. Every thought, thing and action of our being must be surrendered to the will of God lest we carry out some foregone intention of resisting Jehovah.

At least 3 times Pharaoh’s own people and advisers asked him to grant the request of Moses. But Pharaoh would not even listen to his own. For the same reason he would not listen to Moses. It involved humbling himself before someone who claimed complete sovereignty over all his life. He wanted to retain sovereignty over his life (he thought he had it but he never had it at all). Probably some of “your own” will not listen to you. It is not your fault any more than it was Moses’ fault or the fault of Pharaoh’s own advisers. It was Pharaoh’s fault! It was Jehovah with whom Pharaoh had his controversy. It was to God Pharaoh had to answer. One could hardly ask for more a persuasive presentation of evidential materials, more mercy, more time, than Pharaoh had. It certainly was not God’s fault or the fault of his word or his messengers that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

God’s *coup de grace* (final death blow) was the death of every first-born in Egypt (this evidently included girls as well as boys). Even the first born of their cattle. Warned of this coming blow—certainly given evidence that Jehovah (through Moses) was capable of fulfilling the threat—Pharaoh still would not repent. There are people dying by the millions today just as obstinate as Pharaoh. They have the advantage of an indisputable record of 3600 years of demonstrations of God’s power, including the coming of the incarnate-God, his miracles and his resurrection, and still they defy God’s word. Millions today have the demonstrated judgments predicted so minutely in the NT upon the Jewish nation (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21) and upon the Roman Empire (the book of Revelation) and their historical fulfillment, and still they will not repent (see Rev. 9:20-21). So, God allows them the operating power of error so they may, if they wish, believe a lie. In this God condemns all who do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11-12). We have enough evidence to prove to us that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and both just and merciful. Therefore, we must do our job of proclaiming and leave the judging up to God!

EXODUS 12:1—18:27

Six lessons we in the 21st century may learn from the Passover: (a) God keeps his word; (b) God delivers by grace, not by merit! The blood of the Passover lamb was the only difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians; (c) God demands remembrance—remembering involves doing what God commands; (d) once God has “passed over” us, he demands that we put all “leaven” (sin) out of our lives; (e) our “Passover” (Jesus’ vicarious death) is to be perpetuated in our children by teaching them what it means; (f) the NT “Passover”—just as the OT one—belongs only to covenant-keepers.

The Passover is pointed to as a symbol of the entire Christian experience (1 Cor. 5:6-8). This is in the context of Paul’s admonition to the church at Corinth to expel the brother living in sin. If the church today is to symbolically observe its NT “Passover” and “Unleavened Bread” it must keep it “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Even if that involves the hard decisions of disciplining sinning members. Remember the admonitions of 1 Cor. 10:1ff about the sinning members of the Israelite congregation. God was very emphatic about purging the house of the OT worshipers and their sacrifices of leaven (Ex. 29:2,23,32; Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-23; 7:9ff; 8::2,26,32; 10:12; Num. 15:1-9; 15:17:21; 18:9; Ex. 23:18; 34:15ff; Deut. 16:2-4). In later times, some of the Jews disregarded this and offered things to God which had leaven in them and God said he was going to judge them (Amos 4:1-5). Leaven is typical of sin. Sin must be purged from the believer’s life! If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away (Matt. 5:27-30)!

How many times did God tell the OT people to teach his word and his ways to their children? (Ex. 12:25-27; 13:8-10; 10:2; 13:14; Deut. 6:4-9; Prov. 4:1; 5:7; 7:24; 8:32; Isa. 38:19; Deut. 11:19; Psa. 78:5-8; Joel 2:15, and many other places). Let this be a warning to us that God’s ordinances are to be perpetuated in correct form, *and* to be taught as the singular instrument by which believers are to learn something about God and participate in his redemption. It is God’s will that the **children be taught from infancy** to serve him **intelligently**—with their minds. They should be led by adults to ask questions concerning the theological meanings of things like baptism, the Lord’s Supper, offerings, the Bible, etc. That means, however, that parents are going to have to be ready with good answers, or at least know where to point the child so he will get the right answers. **In other words, parents will have to know the Bible!**

The first born of Israel were to be “consecrated” (Heb. *qaddesh*, “make holy, sanctify”) to the Lord. A major purpose for sanctifying the firstborn was to perpetuate the memory of their deliverance from Egypt. Israel tended to forget quickly their divine deliverance. Sanctifying the firstborn was a type of the Christian experience. Christians are called the “firstborn ones” in Heb. 12:23. All Christians are thus sanctified to be holy for God. No Christian should consider himself exempt from commitment to service in God’s work—every Christian is holy to the Lord! Everyone must belong totally to God. Christians have been purchased with a price, redeemed, ransomed, and are thus to be consecrated to the One who purchased them with his sacrifice.

God circumvented the land of the Philistines because he knew the Israelites were not yet able to face warfare (Ex. 14:11-12). God does not allow his people to be tested more than they can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). And the Israelites were not yet spiritually prepared to occupy the promised land. They did not yet have the law, the tabernacle, and had not yet been weaned from idols. They needed yet to be put to the full gamut of the testing of their

faith, and transformed from the slave-mentality into the victor-with-of-God-mentality so they might be spiritual leaders for the wicked world around them, leading people to the One True God (see Ezek. 5:5). God does expect to test his followers, through much tribulation, and bring them to a spiritual growth where they should become teachers (Acts 14:22; Heb. 54:11-14), and lead the lost to him. That is what God intended with the 40 years of Israel's wandering in the Sinai desert. This was to be their school. Affliction is the Christian's *school* (2 Cor. 1:3-11), to teach him just as God taught the Israelites, to rely on God and not on themselves! The afflictions of the wilderness were intended to focus Israel's mind and hopes on the land of Canaan. God never intended Israel to return to Egypt, either in body or in spirit. He does not intend us to return to sin. He wants us focused on heaven!

The spiritual significance of the event in chapter 14 (Israel's crossing the Red Sea) is that it typifies our baptism into Christ (see 1 Cor. 10:1-4) *and* the spiritual reality that baptism is not the ultimate goal of our relationship to God in Christ. We must turn away from immorality, idolatry, putting the Lord to the test (by seeking miraculous signs), and from grumbling. After baptism, sin is to have no more *dominion* over us (Rom. 6; see also 1 Jn. 3:4-10, English Standard Version). Baptism must be preceded by faith, and it is in the **act of baptism**, (baptism becomes the historical point) that we make the **transition** from being lost to being saved. But baptism must be **followed** by faith and not followed with sin like the Israelite's experience and the Red Sea. We must not think we stand in baptism alone. The Israelites thought being baptized into Moses and eating Manna and drinking from the miraculous water secured their salvation. Participating in the miraculous does not save (e.g., Judas who even worked miracles was lost)! Spiritual growth is what saves! Paul wrote, "for whatever was written in former days (i.e., the OT) was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). **LET US TAKE HEED CONCERNING GOD'S WAY OF DISCIPLINE UPON THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.** John writes in Revelation that the church of the early Roman Empire was "nourished in the wilderness" (i.e., in the tribulations that came upon the church A. D. 100-500, Rev. 12:14).

The purpose of the "song" and "singing" in Exodus 15 is to give honor and praise and glory to the Lord—and to the Lord alone! Not one word of glory is given to Moses or Aaron or any human being. The purpose of the song was to **teach!** Note how graphic and explicit it is in describe what the Lord is, what he did and what he will do. Music can be a great, spiritual instrument in worship, both expressionistic, and instructional. Man needs both! But if it is to serve God, it should not be entered into lightly, carelessly, aimlessly, or with any goal in mind except the person-hood of God himself. **The lyrics (words) are singularly important!** "I will sing with the mind and with the spirit"(1 Cor. 14:15)—that is, with mental alertness and in accordance with the revelation of the Holy Spirit (the Bible). Christian music should be no less message-oriented, mind-provoking, spiritually edifying than preaching! Christian music should have lyrics that conform to the New Testament doctrines. Christian music definitely has boundaries within which it must stay to be pleasing to the Lord. Godly music is not permitted the "luxuries" of the inhibitions of the ungodly (Amos 5:23; 6:5) music of any age. The church is not free to use just any and all musical modes and structures. **God wants the mind in music!**

The manna and the water from the rock was to teach Israel to be totally dependent on God. They had to depend on God **to sustain them every day of their existence.** There was no "laying it up for a rainy day" for Israel. Even the day they were not given anything directly from heaven (the Sabbath day) they had to trust the Lord's direction about that day! They were to learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that

comes out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:1-3). They were to learn not to be anxious about tomorrow. They were to learn explicit obedience to the Lord. And so are we! Jesus gave us the fulfillment of what the manna meant when he taught the multitude in John 6, "I am the Bread come down out of heaven." Those who "eat his flesh and drink his blood" will live. Those who do not will die, even as those who ate the manna in the wilderness and then disbelieved, died! How do we eat Jesus's flesh and drink his blood? By believing and obeying his word (see John 6:63). By believing and obeying we have "Christ in us." It is more important that we study and believe and obey his word than that we eat any physical food at all. We dare not neglect his word even if we must starve to death physically! That is what Jesus said, essentially, to the devil at his temptation (Matt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4). That is what God was trying to teach Israel with the manna. He was trying to teach them that his commandments were more important than whether they had food or drink!

Victory came when Moses lifted up his hands because he was depending on the Lord in prayer and praise and obedience. When he became tired, and let down, defeat came (see Heb. 12:1-17, esp. v. 12; Luke 18:1-8; Col. 1:21-23; Rev. 2:10, etc.). We must pray always and not faint (grow weary). The Lord gives victory to the faithful. **We must always depend on him to give this victory in his own way and in his own time.** The battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. ch. 20) illustrates this.

Jethro's advice to Moses was good advice. Moses did well to take Jethro into his confidence and pay attention to the advice. Moses, because of his kindness toward Jethro, probably helped Jethro grow in his relationship to the Lord. It was only a small thing, but it had wide ranging consequences. Had Moses continued, he would have had "preacher burn-out" and "congregation burn-out." One-man "pastor-ship" tends to do that in churches. One-man pastor-ship simply cannot get the job (or jobs) done that must be done in a congregation! One-man pastor-ship robs the congregation of personal participation in the work of the Lord. Any congregation that demands or requires that the preacher do all the calling, all the teaching, all the administrative work, all the leading, all the deciding, is not following Jethro's advice. It is not following New Testament practice (see Acts 6:2-4 Eph. 4:8-16). "Perfecting the saints" is the job of every member of the congregation.

EXODUS 19:1—20:16

Yes! God was threatening the Israelites! He emphatically desired that the Israelites learn to **fear** him (see Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 28:58; 1 Kings 8:40; 8:43 and see the profusion of admonitions to **fear the Lord** in the book of Psalms). The **fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom. What is wrong with humans being afraid of God? It is absolutely healthy to the human spirit to fear God! There is not enough fear of God in human society today and that is why society is the “jungle” it is! Humans have no reason at all **not** to be afraid of God! Does God threaten in the New Testament? Yes! Jesus said, “...fear him (God) who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” And he said that to apostles! (See these NT passages, Rom. 11:20; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 4:1; Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7; Rev. 11:18; 1 Pet. 1:17; Heb. 12:28; **2 Cor. 7:1**; Rev. 19:5). We are to offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe (fear) (Heb. 12:28). Worshiping God without reverence and fear is unacceptable even the Son of Man was heard for his godly *fear* (Heb. 5:7)! Vine’s Expository Dictionary says, “...there was love in the fear of God’s saints then (OT) as there must be fear in their love now (NT).”

God wants the Israelites as his “own possession” to use as his “vessel” to redeem the world. God “acquired” Israel. They became his special “treasure.” He preserved them and protected them, polished them (by testing) and was preparing to use them as instruments of his righteousness in a world of wickedness. But they defaulted! There is no thought of favoritism by God here. God chooses not according to human merit, but by divine sovereignty and omniscience! Man does not know enough about God’s omniscience to claim any special merit when he is chosen. This is Paul’s discussion in Romans chs. 9-10-11.

The use God wanted to make of Israel was as a “kingdom of priests” (i.e., as “ministers of his word to the nations around them). They were to be living epistles of God’s law among mankind. And ultimately they were to produce a godly matrix of humanity through which the Messiah and the messianic kingdom (the church of the NT) would come to the earth. This same special-possession-relationship now belongs to Christians (1 Pet. 2:9-10). God chose Israel, as we know from history, because they had (some of them) been passing on the faith and obedience of their forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). No other “family” had made any indication they would be faithful to God like the “family” of Abraham. Today, God chooses his “peculiar” people through the Gospel of Christ out of every tribe, tongue, nation and people on earth. Israel responded with, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” But they didn’t! They answered too hastily. They had not counted the cost! The Lord is not impressed with enthusiasm (see Lk. 9:57-62; 13:26ff). He places a premium on “counting the cost” (see Lk. 14:25-35). He wants thought-out, hard-nosed, ready-to-accept-responsibility decisions. Remember Peter’s warning about those who turn back (2 Pet. 2). Remember the warning in Hebrews ch. 6 about those having once been enlightened commit apostasy.

The Lord’s command that Israel consecrate itself involved, first, cleansing. God is absolutely clean! In order for humans to come into his presence they must be absolutely cleansed. God does that for man through himself in Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 5:21). God offers that absolute cleansing by grace. But there is more to coming into God’s presence. Grace such as this demands a willingness to follow holiness with all our being. So, God demands of us a character that is controlled by holiness. He wants our mind and heart and body set

apart to living according to his holy will. God decides what holiness is. He reveals the truth about holiness for all humankind. Humans decide whether they want it enough to let God tell them what holiness is and to lead them in **his** holiness. We have no right to make any decisions about **what** is holy. That is decided and revealed by God. In our text, God told the people two things necessary immediately in consecrating themselves to him (**a**) to not go near a woman (sexually); (**b**) to not touch the mountain upon which Moses had received the law. They may sound absurd to men, but God has a reason, and he means what he says! The business of human beings is to exercise obedience. **Obedience is consecration!**

God began the Ten Commandments with, “I am the Lord your God...” because he wanted them to know that humans cannot have the moral values of the Ten Commandments without having faith in the God who gave them! In other words, the Ten Commandments reveal the character, the nature, the will of the Person who gave them. God’s law is a revelation of God’s character. What the Law says is what God is like! God is more than a “good teacher”—he is Lord, Sovereign, King, Ruler, Despot, Dictator, Creator, Maker, Judge, Life, Light, Truth. God is saying, “If you want me, you must take my commandments, because this is what I am!” That should not be surprising to Christians for Jesus said the same thing in John 6:63! God is absolute! He is totally sovereign. He is the only God that truthfully exists. To accede to any god besides Jehovah is to contradict the Bible, and to contradict nature (Psa. 19:1-14; Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 17:22-31) and a contradiction of human conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). So God says, “You shall have no other gods (Heb. *elohim* is plural) before me.” That means more than worshiping idols made of clay, wood or stone. It also means we must not place ourselves above God by thinking and acting contrary to his will in anything.

Yes! Most of the Ten Commandments apply to Christians! Those which do are repeated in the New Testament. Actually, there is only one of the Ten which does not literally apply to the Christian, and that is the one about Keeping the seventh day of the week (the “Sabbath”). And even that one applies in a symbolic, typical, and spiritual way! Hebrews 4:3 says of Christians, “we who are believing, are entering that rest...” They are all present tense verbs in Hebrews 4:3 in the Greek text. Paul was writing to Hebrew-Christians telling them that as they were believing in Christ, they were entering the great “Sabbath-rest” (Greek, *sabbatismos*) which remained after the OT Sabbath (Heb. 4:4-13). The Christian life here and now, and later in heaven, is the fulfillment of the Sabbath day of the OT (see our Sunday School notes on Hebrews chapter 4). In the new dispensation (NT) God has no special days (Rom. 14:5ff). The whole Christian life is a Sabbath—just like the whole Christian life is a “Passover and Unleavened Bread-feast” (1 Cor. 5:7ff). You see how much higher the NT is above the Old. **Every day** in the Christian experience is a day to be kept holy for the Lord (Rom. 14:5-9). It is like our “possessions”—in the Christian experience God demands stewardship of 100% consecrated to him—not just 10% or 20% or 50%.

The rich, young, ruler definitely failed to observe the 10th commandment. He may have failed in some of the others. He claims to have kept all the others from his youth to adulthood. But he coveted what God said he should give up. He desired what God said he should not. Jesus said of the Pharisees, “Who were lovers of money...” “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts: for what is exalted among men (money) is an abomination in the sight of God” (Lk. 16:14). To lust for anything or anyone, to exalt anything or anyone above God, is to **covet**. Actually, to “enthroned” anything or anyone above God is **idolatry**. So, the rich, young, ruler was violating the **first**

commandment as well (“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”), and he may have “worked” on the Sabbath to gain his riches and violated that commandment. He probably “coveted” what his neighbors had as well. Truth to tell, the rich, young, ruler probably violated almost all the 10 commandments! He wanted eternal life, but he did not want the commandments of the God who gives eternal life. This is as modern as the 21st century. Millions want the blessings without the commandments! They want to live in the presence of holiness (at least in a comparatively holy society) without the commandments to holiness for their own lives! WE MUST SOW THE SEED OF GOD’S WORD AND TEACH PEOPLE THAT A “GOOD” AND “ETERNAL” LIFE CANNOT BE GIVEN THEM APART FROM THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST!

Jesus did not destroy the law! **Jesus brought the law to its goal** (i.e., he “fulfilled,” “perfected,” and “completed” it). How did he “fulfill, perfect, complete, and bring the law to its **goal**”? (a) he became the perfect man, obeying the law of God perfectly; (b) he lived out the purpose of the law in demonstrating the sinfulness of sin and condemned sin as a sinless human being; (c) he completed the righteous sentence of the law upon sin by receiving in his own Person the penalty for sin; (d) he was the reality of all the types and prophecies of the law; (e) he commanded of his followers all that was really essential to righteousness before God in the law—the spirit and substance of the law is summed up in the two great commandments (Matt. 22:34-40). The law of God still stands as God’s absolute standard of righteousness before him. It is by the law that all the world will be judged. Christ has offered, by grace through faith in him, fulfillment of God’s law for anyone who will trust him and obey him. The only other alternative to pleasing God and escaping his absolute justice is to keep his law perfectly. And every person’s conscience tells him he has not done so! Jesus wants to build in us a righteousness by faith that fulfills the law—that exceeds legalism—based on love for God and man.

The Ten Commandments **proved** (i.e., *tested* their faith) the people of Israel in the same way the New testament commands of Christ and the apostles **prove** (i.e., *test* our faith) people in the 21st century. God did not “test” Israel to discover for himself how they would react in any situation—God already knew that! But as any experienced teacher or parent knows, a test is a powerful training tool in itself. Testing intensifies study, thought and learning. God’s awesome demonstrations at Sinai brought the Israelites “face to face” with realities (which is what a test does) of his power and majesty that many of them simply had not yet faced up to (not that they had lacked opportunity). In testing them God was giving them one more intense opportunity to learn and become what they were capable of becoming. That is what all our testing is for in this life. God does not need to test us to gather evidence so he can judge us. He already has that or knows that. His commandments and our circumstances (whether of God’s providence or by his permission and our stupidity) are all tests designed to further our learning process. Actually, they are designed to “conform us to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29) who, in human form, was tested in all points as we are tested!

God demanded they make their altars of earth in order to keep them **humble**. No ostentatious and ornate solid gold or silver altars for God’s people. Simplicity and utility is what God prefers. God demanded they make no steps to their altars probably to maintain **modesty**—lest the priests going up steps expose “their nakedness.” Humility and modesty have always been premium character traits of those who belong to God. Paul writes about “modesty” in 1 Tim. 2:9. There he uses the Greek phrase, *kosmein sophrosunes*, stating that women (and it would certainly apply also to men) should “adorn” (Gr. *kosmein*, “arrange, order, discipline”) themselves “modestly” (Gr. *sophrosunes*, “restraining passions, sensibly”).

SPECIAL STUDY ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

adapted from *Exploring Exodus*, Bible Study Textbook Series, by Wilbur Fields,
1975, College Press, pp. 410-421

The Ten Commandments, a Protection:

First commandment: protection from false gods, 20:2-3

Protection from false worship, 20:4-6

Protection from misusing God's name, 20:7

Protection of rest and the remembrance of creation, 20:8-11

Protection of parents, 20:12

Protection of human life, 20:13

Protection of marriage, 20:14

Protection of property, 20:15

Protection of truth, 20:16

Protection from evil desires, 20:17

The Teaching of the Ten Commandments As Given in the New Testament

No other gods, 1 Cor. :5-6; Acts 14:15; Matt. 22:36-37; 1 Tim. 2:5

No grave image, 1 Jn. 5:21; Acts 15:20,29; 1 Cor. 5:10,11; Rev. 2:14

Name not in vain, James 5:12; Matt. 12:36; Rev. 13:6

Sabbath, Heb. 4:1-13; Col. 2:16; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10

Honor parents, Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20; Matt. 15:4-6; 1 Tim. 5:3-4

Murder, Matt. 5:21-22; Rom. 12:14—13:10; 1 Jn. 3:15

Marriage, Adultery, Matt. 5:27-28; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Cor. 7:1-40

Thievery, Eh. 4:28; Titus 2:10; Rom. 12:17

False witness, lying, Matt. 5:33-34; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25

Covetousness, Eph. 5:3,5, Lk. 12:15; 12:16-21; Rom. 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:10

Where do we find the ten commandments in the Bible? We find them in Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5. We also find them in the Supreme Court Building of the USA!

How significant are the ten commandments? (a) They are recognized as the basis of all public morality in the western world. Their influence is too great for calculation. Probably our society could not survive without these simple comprehensive regulations; (b) They are a *unique* thing in all the religious teachings of the world. They are without any real parallels. They are unique in their teaching that it is impossible to separate morality from religion. They are unique in making duties to mankind on a par with duties to God. They are unique in the awe-inspiring manner in which they were delivered. They are unique in both their comprehensiveness and the conciseness.

How does the world feel about the ten commandments? Most people will say, "Oh, the ten commandments are great!" But in their hearts they really do not like some of the commandments. The philosopher will Durant said, "The world has never quite come to terms with the ten commandments." This is not surprising. The apostle Paul in Romans 8:7 declared, "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be."

What are the names that are given to the ten commandments? We believe in using Bible names for Bible things. We believe also that names tell us very much about the character and function of the things that are named. What are the names? (a) The **"ten words"** (or commandments), Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4. This is the Biblical name for them. The term **words** does not refer to single words, but to utterances, or sayings. We use the term **word** with the same signification in such statements as "Bring me word"; (b) the name **"Decalogue"** is a good title for the ten commandments. It comes from the Greek words *deka* (meaning, "ten") and *logos* (meaning "word"). It is first found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160-210), and was commonly used by the church "fathers" who followed him; (c) "the words of hte covenant" (Ex. 34:28); (d) "the tables of the covenant" (Deut. 9:9); (e) "The covenant" (Deut. 4:13); (f) The two tables (Deut. 9:10-17); (g) "The testimony" (a very common name for them) (Ex. 16:34; 25:16; see also Isa. 8:16,20); (h) "The tables of the testimony" (Ex. 31:18); (i) "The commandments" (Matt. 19:17).

How are the ten commandments to be divided? The scripture does **not** set forth any division of the ten commandments, either as to which commandment is number one, tow...te; or as to how the commandments were divided up and arranged on the original stone tablets. We do know that there were TEN commandments, but opinions differ as to how these are divided. (a) *Which commandments are to be numbered one, two, etc.?* (1) Most Protestants and the ancient Jewish authorities Philo and Josephus treat 20:3 as the first commandment, 20:4-6 as the second, and thus on to 20:17 as the tenth. We prefer this arrangement; (2) Jewish scholars regard Ex. 20:2 as the first commandment. Then 20:3-6 is treated as the second commandment. The remainder are divided up as most Protestants do, with all of 20:17 being the tenth commandment; (3) Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians treat

20:3-6 as the first commandment; 20:7 as the second, and thus on to 20:17, which is divided into two commandments the ninth and tenth. The ninth is “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house,” and the tenth is “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife.” Most non-Catholics suspect that this method of dividing the commandments was made to de-emphasize the commandment against image-making. When stated as a separate command, the law against image-making seems somewhat more definite than it does as part of the commandment about having no other gods. As for dividing the commandment against coveting into two commandments, the form of the commandments in Deut. 5:21 argues against this. There the order of the two primary objects of coveting (house and wife) is reversed from that in Exodus. Also a synonym for *covet* (desire) is used instead of *covet* in one of the statements. This seems to us to weaken the probability that there are two commandments there. **(b) *How were the ten commandments arranged and divided on the original stone tablets?*** The undeniable truth is that we do not know. Some have proposed that five were on one slab and five on the other. This arrangement would have placed 137 words on the first tablet and only 26 on the second. Others have suggested that the first three laws were on the first tablet and the last seven were on the second. This arrangement would come as near to equalizing the writing on each slab as could be done, and still allow the first tablet to end at the bottom with a completed commandment. Others have proposed that the first tablet had the first four commandments, which concern men’s duties to God; and the second tablet had the last six, which involve men’s duties to men. To this we can only say “Maybe so.” This arrangement would placed 122 words on the first tablet and 41 on the second. We see no reason for assuming that the first tablet had to end its writing at a division between commandments. Many ancient tablets ended in mid-sentence, and then the writing continued on the next tablet.

What is the relation of the Decalogue to the rest of the laws in Exodus? The law of Moses (the Torah) makes no clear line of separation between the ten commandments and the laws in the chapters that follow it. All alike disclose the will of God. Admittedly the ten commandments stand out most prominently among the precepts of the Torah because of the awe-inspiring manner in which they were given and because of their fundamental and far-reaching importance. Only the ten commandments were placed in the ark of the covenant (Ex. 40:20). The conciseness and comprehensiveness of the Decalogue are unique in all the world’s literature. Nonetheless, there is still no clear demarcation between the authority and permanence of the Decalogue and that of the other laws of Moses. The Decalogue is called the *covenant* in Ex. 34:28, but the other laws also constitute the “book of the *covenant*” (24:7). While the Decalogue was kept IN the ark, the other laws were kept BY the side of the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26). The two “greatest commandments” of all are not even included among the ten commandments (see Matt. 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Interpreters have sometimes tried to maintain that the ten commandments are the permanent MORAL law, and that this was not done away with as were the CEREMONIAL laws when Christ died on the cross. This is simply not a valid division of the law. There are many MORAL laws outside of the ten commandments (see Ex. 23:1-3 for example). Also Sabbath law in the ten commandments has a partly CEREMONIAL character. Furthermore in God’s laws, ceremonial laws often have distinctly moral character about them (note Ex. 23;10-12). The

law is simply not divisible into distinct categories. The law is a unit, and the ten commandments, in spite of all their distinctive features, are an integral part of the larger undivided LAW given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

How do the ten commandments differ in Exodus from the form given in Deuteronomy? (1) The fourth commandment (about the Sabbath) is different in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy says (in 5:12) to *keep* (or observe) the Sabbath, rather than to *remember* it, as in Ex. 20:8. Deut. 5:12 adds “as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.” Deut. 5:14 adds “your ox or your ass” and “that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.” Deut. 5:15 says that the Sabbath is to be observed in memory of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, rather than because Jehovah made heaven and earth in six days and rested the seventh day (Ex. 20:11); (2) In the fifth commandment (Deut. 5:16) the words “that it may go well with thee” are added. Also Deuteronomy has the words “as the LORD thy God commanded thee” added; (3) In Deut. 5:18-21 the last four commandments are all introduced by “and” (sometimes translated “neither”); (4) The tenth commandment (about coveting) is considerably different in Deuteronomy 5:21 from Ex. 20:17. Deuteronomy reverses the order of “wife” and “house.” Deuteronomy adds “field.” Deuteronomy also uses “desire” as a synonym for *covet* at the second occurrence of the word *covet*.

How shall we account for the differences between the form of the ten commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy? Probably it is to be accounted for by the fact that in Deuteronomy Moses was citing somewhat extemporaneously God’s words that had been given at Mt. Sinai. Often in such cases the very words themselves are not cited, but certain variations and changes are introduced. The version in Exodus twenty is said to have been written by the very finger of God (Ex. 31:18). We accept this as true and therefore regard the commandments there as being the exact original wording. When Moses repeated the law nearly 40 years later in the Plains of Moab (as given in Deuteronomy), he enlarged upon many parts of it and paraphrased it somewhat. For an illustration, compare the laws about the Hebrew slave (servant) in Ex. 21:1-6 and Deut. 15:12-18). Compare also the laws about the Feast of Weeks in Ex. 23:16 and Deut. 16:9-12. Compare also Ex. 20:24-26 and Deut. 27:5-8. We should not be surprised to find some minor variations between the ten commandments as given in Exodus and in Deuteronomy. This does NOT imply that the Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments is inferior, or represents only Moses’ own imperfect memory of them or his own personal interpretation of the Exodus ch. 20 commandments! Jehovah spoke through Moses at the Plain of Moab just as certainly as he spoke on Mt. Sinai (see Num. 36:13; Deut. 29:1). God allowed Moses or caused Moses to speak some new words in Deuteronomy ch. 5. But the ideas are unchanged, or are merely enlarged upon. There is no conflict of truth between Exodus and Deuteronomy. A commentator named Cassuto (pp. 250-251) calls attention to the fact that the two laws which differ most in Deuteronomy from Exodus (the laws on obeying parents and the Sabbath law) both insert in Deuteronomy the words “as Jehovah thy God commanded thee.” Thus Moses alluded to the fact that although the commandments were expressed one way in Deuteronomy, he was not quoting their precise words.

Were the ten commandments given at first in the words in which we now have

them? It is a popular opinion that the ten commandments as originally given were all brief, succinct, one-line commandments. Supposedly the enlargements and explanations given with some of the commandments (like those in the commandments about graven images, the Sabbath day, and coveting) were added later. We do not feel that this is a correct opinion. The text says of itself that God spake ALL these words (21:1). When Moses repeated the ten commandments in Deuteronomy 5, he declared that “These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire.” Moses referred to the ten commandments in the form in which we now have them. Also we feel that the idea that the commandments were originally all brief one-line assertions rests upon a basic misunderstanding of the commandments that are somewhat elaborated. The commandments that are elaborated (the ones about graven images, Sabbath day, coveting, etc.) are the very ones which expressed NEW religious ideas. Laws about stealing or killing were familiar. But the ideas of a God who must not be represented in any material form, and of a regular day of rest to commemorate the rest of God after creation, and of a law against *desiring* other people’s possessions—these were new and revolutionary ideas which required some elaboration, even in the concise presentation the ten commandments make.

Are Christians under the ten commandments? To this vital question, we must give a *paradoxical* answer—Yes and No! To the Christian the law is *holy* and *righteous* and *good* (Rom. 7:12-13). We do not nullify the law through faith. God forbid! Rather, we *establish* the law (Rom. 3:31). Christ came not to destroy the law, but to *fulfill* it (Matt. 5:17). He came “that the ordinance (or requirement) of the law might be *fulfilled* in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (Rom. 8:4). We *delight* in the law of God in our inward man (Rom. 8:22). We can speak with all the intensity of King David: “Oh how I *love* thy law! It is my meditation all the day!” (Psa. 119:97). The scriptures of the O.T. law are “able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:25). We could never praise God’s law enough! In spite of the preceding sincere praise of the ten commandments and the other laws of Moses, we must declare categorically that WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW, including the ten commandments. Rom. 6:15 declares, “We are not under the law but under grace.” Please consider the following argument carefully: (1) Ex. 34:28 and Deut. 9:9 specifically refer to the ten commandments as being the *covenant*; (2) Jer. 31:31-32 prophesied that God would make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, not like the covenant he made when he brought them out of Egypt; (3) Heb. 8:6-13 declares that Christ is now the mediator of a *new* and better *covenant*, and contrasts this new covenant with the very one God made when he led Israel out of Egypt. In 2 Cor. 3:6, Paul declared that he was a minister of a *new covenant*, not of a covenant written on stones (and only the ten commandments were written on stones). When the present United States were colonies of Great Britain, the Continental Congress enacted laws against various crimes. Our present laws include ordinances against some of the same crimes. Does this mean that we are still under the laws of the Continental Congress because some of our present laws have provisions like those of the Continental Congress? Similarly, although numerous laws in the old covenant are repeated in the new covenant, that does not mean we are under the old covenant. Our Christian laws get their authority from being in the new covenant, whether they were in the old covenant or not. As a matter of fact, nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament in one

form or another. Only the Sabbath law is not repeated. So, as a matter of fact, we are under most of the ten commandments, not because we are legally under the covenant that included the ten commandments, but because *the new covenant includes* most of these commandments. When the apostles and elders held the big conference in Jerusalem to determine whether Gentile Christians had to keep the customs of Moses or not (Acts 15:1-5), their decision (which was reached by the guidance of the Holy Spirit—Acts 15:28; Gal. 2:2) was that the Gentiles did not have to keep any of the laws of Moses except to avoid idolatry, and fornication, and things strangled, and eating blood (Acts 15:20). Not a word was uttered about keeping Sabbath days, or diet laws, or feast days, or sacrifices, or circumcision. Failure to understand these things will cause us to seek to return to the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:7), a ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9). The law of Moses passed away (2 Cor. 3:11). It brings us under a curse (Gal. 3:10). It causes us to be cut off from Christ (Gal. 5:4). It was only a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). **Let us hold on to Christ, and in so doing we shall fulfill the law.**

EXODUS 21:1—23:33

No! God does not condone slavery! God never intended any human being to be **owned** by another human being, assuming that human beings were animals or property. Actually, indentured servant-hood among the Israelites was God's way of keeping them **from** enslaving one another. The poor Israelite who could not pay his debts was provided a way to "work-off" his indebtedness. He could do it by **hiring** himself out as a servant to his creditor. It is a heathen society that treats human beings as property and **enslaves** them, working them and abusing them without any remuneration at all. American slavery, even at its best, was a far cry from even OT standards of human rights! The commandments of the OT law were to protect men from being subjected to slavery. The Israelite "servant" was to be treated as a "wage earner." The Hebrew "servant" could not be indentured against his wishes more than 6 years. He was to be given gifts of property when freed. Girls who became servants to pay their father's debts were to be treated as a family member in the master's household. The Israelite system was even more in keeping with the dignity of man than a government "dole" (or welfare) system. The modern "welfare system" is closer to slavery than indentured servant-hood. Actually, the American working man is an indentured servant whether he realizes it or not. Only a few of the very rich (and mostly those who inherit their riches) are ever anything but indentured servants, working for someone else's profit while they simply receive wages.

The killer who **premeditates** a killing is a **murderer** in the first degree. He has **planned** to overthrow social order. The man who kills someone "accidentally" is guilty of manslaughter. It was not his **intent** to destroy social order. Exodus describes the second kind of killer ("accidental") as one into whose hands **God allowed** the victim to fall! How about that! Is God in control or not! **Human life is sacred! Whoever assails this sanctity forfeits his own life.** That has been a law of God since the world began! Capital punishment for murder is an absolute of God—not of man! There may be a number of reasons such as its deterrent factor, its justice factor, etc. But most probably the idea is that murder is so absolutely destructive of social order, the murderer declares himself a total anarchist and must therefore be permanently removed from society. Whatever God's reasoning, the fact remains it is a commandment of God in both OT and NT and is, therefore, to be carried out whether human reasoning or feelings agree with it or not (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:13-17; Acts 25:11). And remember, God is the greatest executioner of all, putting people to death forever!

Smiting one's parents, kidnapping, or cursing parents (leaving them to starve to death) are also serious enough crimes against the very foundations of social structure and order to deserve the death penalty! If the family is not sacrosanct (inviolable), then every area of society is in danger of destruction. There can be no school (learning), no civil government, no worship, no economic security, no reproducing of the human race, if the authority of the home is eroded. The home is the most basic element necessary for social order. Why do you think there is so much crime, immorality, economic chaos, disruption of education, lack of patriotism, unconcern for others, and lethargy in human creativeness? **Because** of the erosion of the hierarchy of the home as God has ordained it! A number of factors have contributed to that erosion. But it is all a vicious cycle—wars, divorce, materialism, etc., etc.

The law of *Lex Talio Onis* is literally, "**The Law of Retaliation**" better known as "an

eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Actually, while it seems rather barbaric to us, it was a step up from what most of the world of that day practiced which was “the law of unlimited revenge.” Unlimited revenge is no law at all! It is somewhat like that situation in some instances in modern society (especially in relation to urban gangs and terrorism, etc.), the law of retaliation would be very appropriate. Of course, in the Christian society (*within the church*) the law of unlimited forgiveness is to be practiced. We should choose rather to be defrauded than to defraud (1 Cor. 6:1-8). We must learn to turn the other cheek and go the second mile (Matt. 5:38-42). And how does one learn that? By faith and by doing it! Christian character does not come by inoculation or by contagion. Christian character does not automatically overwhelm us against our will at the moment of baptism. It comes by indoctrination and involvement!

Yes! Property owners are required by God to be **responsible!** Both the OT and NT teach this! The NT teaches it in 1 Cor. 6; Matt. 5; Rom. 13:7-10; 1 Cor. 9-10-11; Rom. 14:1—15:6. While there is no detail in the NT as to the liability of property owners. Certainly with the Christian, his liability and obligation is much more binding than that of the OT. If a person is not willing to be responsible for the safety of others in connection with property he may own, he should not own the property! This applies to automobile insurance (or enough money of one’s own to cover accident or loss), homeowner’s insurance, tools, etc. One should not allow people to put themselves in jeopardy with one’s property if the property owner does not want to be liable. That is only NT love!

The OT laws against thievery would be **very helpful** to general society today. **They certainly would favor the victim rather than the criminal.** They would be a strong deterrent against robbery and thievery. They would probably be more rehabilitating than incarceration! Of course, repeated thievery by a criminal would have to eventuate in incarceration or execution. Thieves entering a man’s house by night were “open season” to be killed by the homeowner without the homeowner incurring guilt. This provision was because the thief entering at night is to be suspected of aiming at bodily harm for the householder, while the thief entering during the day could be observed more clearly and closely and might be determined as up to no bodily harm. Human life is sacrosanct. Even the slightest **indication** (a thief breaking and entering at night) that human life might be in jeopardy **is cause for self defense!** If self defense is proper at night, it certainly would be proper in the **daytime** if it is clearly evident that life is being threatened! See *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, Butler, 1990, College Press, concerning the O.T. laws and modern civil law in the USA.

The phrase, “This is it” refers to an instance when two parties are contending that one object of property belongs to both. The Lord would decide through a priest whose property it was. There was no such thing as “finders, keepers, losers, weepers” among the Israelites. A lost object of property belongs to the original owner, no matter who finds it and keeps it! **Private ownership of property was very important and sacrosanct with the Lord in the OT!** It would be a good law for any modern society. It is especially obligatory on God’s kingdom people in any age.

Do people have a right to be protected from falsehood—from that which is salacious and pornographic? Do people have a right to expect human governments to legislate and enforce against falsehood? What kind of falsehood should be legislated against? How severe should the penalty for violation be? A law without a penalty is no law! A penalty without enforcement is no penalty! A government which legislates and does not enforce has no credibility with its constituents! Sorcery was a capital crime! Sorcerers were to be executed! Under God’s rule, the spreading of falsehood of any kind is severely condemned.

We are surrounded by “sorcery” in many forms today. Any attempt to by-pass the rule of God in nature and human life by pseudo (false, not real) ideologies or religions or communications is “sorcery.” It will not be tolerated in the presence of God! God does not want it in his kingdom! Certainly, falsehood cannot be tolerated in the kingdom of God (the church). Remember what God has said about false prophets and false teachers in both the OT and NT. **This could be applied to the teaching of “evolution” to our children; to “psychics” and “fortune-tellers”; to new-agers; to politicians who “hedge” the truth with semantics and evasions, etc.**

The OT law legislated that a person must help another in need even if that person hates you and is your enemy. Now here is one place where human governments cannot (or at least should not attempt) to legislate. Human governments are not that spiritual! And you’ve always heard that the OT law was not spiritual. Yet this is as spiritual as Jesus’ teaching about the Good Samaritan or his statements in the Sermon on The Mount! The ungodly attitude toward an enemy in trouble is, “He deserves it...” “Serves him right...” “He got into the mess, let him get out b himself.” But for the person who fears God, that will not do. We must help our enemies.

The earth is the Lord’s to do with as he pleases. It is his by right of creation. No man has a right to challenge his disposal of any part of the earth or the heavens (see Jer. 27:5ff; Acts 17:26). He sets kings on their thrones and takes them off (Dan. 2:21). God had promised the land of Palestine to Abraham and his descendants. The Canaanites forfeited even the right to exist by their depravity. They burned their children alive as offerings to their idols; they sexually violated women and men homosexually and heterosexually as part of their religion; they were a wild, unlawful, cruel, beastly people. They were defiantly opposed to God and his kingdom on earth. God charged the Israelites with utterly driving the Canaanites out of the land. None of them were to remain. Israel must tear down all their pillars (idols and altars). Israelites were not even to be curious about Canaanite culture! **There is a lesson for Christians here.** Christians are to be unmitigated in their opposition to sin—abhorring even the appearance of evil. Anything that appears to be evil, whether you can prove it is evil or not, is to be abhorred!

EXODUS 24:1—31:18

Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices upon the altar, the people and the book of the covenant itself (see Heb. 8:18-20) to signify they had been **cleansed** and thus fit to be sanctified or consecrated to serve Jehovah-God. The blood signified a death had occurred for atonement for the sins of the people and everything about them was cleansed. God could not make a covenant with sinners until they were purified. If they had not been purified, everything they touched and everything related to them would have been **unclean**. He purified them by his *gracious* acceptance of the death of an animal in their place—looking forward to the Ultimate Sacrifice, **Jesus Christ**, the perfect human being. The blood on the altar signified there had been a change in God's attitude toward the Israelites. He satisfied his justice and wrath upon sin in the death of the animal (temporarily) and could then accept all their worship in his presence. The blood on the people signified there had to be a change in the people. Henceforth, they are in covenant with the God of holiness and truth—and he has provided the covenant—so it is all by grace. They must now dedicate themselves to his revealed word (blood sprinkled on the book signifies this connection). They are no longer their own, they have been bought with a price. From then on they were to see everything from God's perspective (i.e., through his word, or commandments).

The only hint we get as to what God "looked like" is the mention of his "feet." Evidently God looked like a human—at least as much as Moses, Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and the 70 elders of Israel "saw." In some OT and NT "visions" of God he is represented in some "human" form (see Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:13 & Rev. 1:13). Other "visions" of God on his throne are so Majestic that there are hardly any terms in human language to describe him (see Isa. 6:1-13; Ezek. 1:1-29; Rev. 1:12-20). There just aren't any other human words profound enough, except "human," by which to try to describe what God "looks like." The text also speaks of God's "hand." In Exodus 33 we will read that God put Moses in the "cleft of the rock" and covered Moses with his hand until God passed by. Moses would see God's "back" but not God's "face," for no man in this sin-condemned world can see the face of God and live. "Face" means countenance, visage, personage. "To take the face" means to respect the person—that is, to recognize someone for who he is. No man can experience such an intimate encounter or "face to face" stare-down with God and live. So, whatever these men "beheld" of God it was very limited. It was enough that God would invite them nearer to him and allow them to eat and drink in his presence. What wonder, what grace, that Jesus Christ would condescend to invite men into his presence, let alone allow his Holy Spirit to live in them!

Moses had to make the Tabernacle exactly like the "pattern" God showed him because God planned to use that Tabernacle to teach men about his ultimate, final, completed plan of salvation for the whole world. If the Tabernacle is in error, men will not find God's salvation. If the Tabernacle (the blue-print, the schematic) is wrong, God's hand in the final building (redemption and the church) will not be found. It will appear to be simply another "wrong" work of man. **The tabernacle is called a "parable" of the New Covenant scheme of redemption in Hebrews 9:6—the actual Greek word, translated "symbol," is *parabole*, literally, "parable."** Most certainly, if Moses was charged to make the **type** according to the pattern, those who wish to receive the blessings of the fulfillment (New Covenant redemption) must acknowledge the necessity to obey the letter of the New Covenant plan of salvation (hear, believe, repent, be immersed in water, live the Christian life). What if Moses had left out the altar, the laver, the bread of the presence, the lamp-

stand, the ark of the Covenant? How would the people of the OT even have learned anything about their relationship to God? What if Moses had left out the sprinkling of the blood, the anointing with oil, the veil, the incense, etc? We know what happened to two men who decided to *change* God's pattern! WHAT ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TODAY WHO THINK THEY CAN CHANGE THE CLEARLY REVEALED WILL OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The Tabernacle was a tent so the Israelites could take it with them wherever they went. They were going to be very mobile for 40 years. Without the tent, God's presence would not be **visible** to them. And as spiritually immature as they were they needed a **visible** presence which would be a constant reminder of who they were and what kind of God they served! Are Christians so immature they need a building, a cathedral, a sanctuary, a church building, before they can acknowledge that God is with them? Jesus dealt with that issue in John 4:19-25. Church buildings are nice, useful, and certainly not anti-scriptural. But they are not necessary! Christians do not need a building to remind them who they are and what kind of God they serve! God has "tented" among men in human form (John 1:1-18). Now, through his Word, he dwells in believers to constantly remind them who they are and what kind of Savior and Lord he is. Believers are from every tribe, tongue, people and nation on earth. Wherever they are or wherever they go, God, in the Spirit of Christ, goes with them. His presence is known and shared anywhere and everywhere. That is what the whole book of Hebrews is about. Christians do not need a visible temple, visible sacrifices, visible high priest. The reality of God's person and participation is seen and experienced in much more certainty through the "better things" of the New Covenant.

The "mercy seat" is from the Hebrew word *kapporeth* which means, "place to please or propitiate and be reconciled" to God. It was of pure gold and placed **over** the tables of stone signifying that men cannot confront God's law which they have broken without perishing **unless** there is a "mercy seat" sprinkled with blood to "cover" their sinfulness. The "mercy seat" was where God met with Israel to speak with them all he wished to command them. It is a type of God's throne (see Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10; Heb. 9:5, etc.). It was **the** major spot of significance in the ritual on the Day of Atonement (i.e., Yom Kippur) (Lev. 16:2,14,15). Jesus Christ is our "mercy seat" (i.e., our propitiation, our expiation, our covering, the one who pleases God for us) and it is in Jesus Christ that God meets with us to command to us all he desires to be accomplished in us.

The outer court was made to accommodate the sinful people who could not enter the tent, for only sanctified priests were allowed in the Holy Place. Only the high priest was allowed in the Holy of Holies—and then only once each year on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The outer court was within reach of all Israelites as the means for their forgiveness. The outer court became a type of the world—actually of God's **outreach** into the world. Later, in the days of the temple, they even had a court outside the outer-court, called "The Court of The Gentiles." But the "outer-court" was for the men of Israel. As God placed the outer court within the reach of all Israelites, so he has placed in the world the means for forgiveness to all who will draw near seeking him. In the "outer court" of the New Testament dispensation is Christ's atonement (typified by the altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle), and baptism (typified in the Tabernacle by the laver). All who come to God in the New Covenant must accept the sacrifice of Christ (God's perfect "altar"), and be immersed in water for the remission of sin (God's perfect washing), whereupon they are set apart (sanctified) as "priests" and are to enter and minister in the Church (God's perfect "Holy Place").

God did not “overdress” his priests. Everything had a purpose in their costume. Priests, by the very nature of their office as “go-between,” must be set apart or distinguished from those for whom they mediate or they are not respected by their constituency. That is one reason God “costumed” them so gloriously. Another reason was that their constituents must recognize and **acknowledge** the gloriousness and seriousness of the priest’s work. It was also to impress the significance of their ministry upon the priests **themselves**. The priestly garb of the OT was rather modest and un presupposing when compared with the elaborate dress of the pagan priests contemporary with them—and even compared with modern religions which have a special priesthood. But we must always remember the immaturity (spiritually speaking) of the OT people. God was trying to educate and mature a spiritually-minded people unto himself. It would take some time and some very pointed, basic, visible, proto-type child-like tools through to teach! Their elaborate dress was one of those “tools. In the New covenant dispensation, **all believers are priests** (1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9). There are no “go-between,” elite priests between NT believers and their God (except, of course, the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:11-17, etc.). Therefore, it would be apostasy to return to a system which was less than the fulfillment. Those who minister to God are all one. There is no need to distinguish one from another. Certain members (i.e., preachers) of the New Covenant do not need “clergy” robes because they are no more priests than any other believer. The Church of the Lord today needs to be constantly on guard against the subtle forms of fostering a “clergy—laity” system of separation of the members of the body of Christ. We sometimes tend toward that in over-emphasis of what we call, “the Leadership of the Church” or “the Pastor of the Church.” An elder may be my spiritual overseer, but he is not my priest¹ he is not my mediator! He does not worship or serve **for** me.

All those inconvenient and “yucky” things done to the priests to consecrate them were absolutely necessary to “paint the picture” of what God required in those who approached him to serve him in the immature, OT times. Anyone who dared to beg to serve God must be cleansed, set apart, and have their “hands filled” for service. And those who serve the absolute, total God, must be total in their service—ears, eyes, hands and feet. The priest becomes a “slave of God” as it were, giving himself in perpetual service. Others may **try** to get by with giving **partial** time, effort, talents, possessions, to some god they think they can dictate to, or fool, or manipulate. But true believers must acknowledge total slavery to a total God. True believers must learn absolute obedience to an absolute God. True believers must learn that service to God cannot be profaned at the penalty of death! Many things God commanded in the OT seemed inconvenient and “yucky” but the major lesson to be learned was **obedience and trust in God**. The same is true of the New Testament church. Members of God’s New Kingdom must **learn to trust God and obey his word, no matter what others may rationalize or hold in contempt about God**.

God made the “ransom-shekel” payment necessary to teach the Israelites that they were indebted to God for their redemption. It goes against the grain of human pride to be indebted, obligated, or “beholden.” Why? Because that means a person is responsible, is committed to, has no option to exercise, is bound in a debt. Implied in this law about census-taking and paying “ransom money” is the truth that God owns all souls (people) (see Ezek. 18:4). And human beings resist being owned! **Owned by God, that is!** Most human beings think nothing at all of indenturing, obligating, or committing themselves to a bank or credit corporation for massive sums of money for homes and automobiles or everything else under the sun that a credit-card will obtain! But obligating oneself to God, and paying a small “ransom tax”? NO WAY. This shekel was only 4/10 of an ounce. Anyone could afford this small payment and the very smallness should have made it obvious that the people

were **not** purchasing their atonement by such a pittance—but simply acknowledging they had a debt which God alone could take care of for them (see 1 Pet. 1:18-19). It also proved, since rich and poor alike paid the same, that all people stand alike before God. All are sinners who need grace!

The Sabbath was given **central, foundational** emphasis in the Israelite covenant because in keeping it Israel was to admit and testify to others that it was Jehovah (God of Covenant) that sanctified them (set them apart from all other people). The Sabbath was **God's Sabbath**, not man's. Not even work on the Tabernacle, as important as that was, could be done on the Sabbath days. The penalty for profaning the Sabbath Day was execution by stoning to death. One man picking up sticks, on the Sabbath, was executed (Num. 15:32-36). To desecrate the Sabbath was an open, blatant, corrupting denial of God's sovereignty. It was a mockery of the covenant! It was a renunciation of being an Israelite, it was apostasy! Failure to observe times of worship makes men forget that God is the Lord who makes men holy. We ought to take our worship times of God with equal seriousness. But the Christian worships God every day of the week and year (see Rom. 14:5-9; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:20-23). No day is to be venerated above another for the Christian. The Christian is given the privilege of a much higher plane of intimacy with God. He worships God everywhere, all the time, being his own priest. He does not restrict his worship to a Tabernacle miles away, to one day per week, and to the impersonal intercessions of another person for him.

EXODUS 32:1—34:35

The delay of Moses coming down from the mountain prompted the Israelites to ask for “gods who shall go before us” because they wanted a deity that was **visible**. Moses was their visible contact with an invisible God. It is the same attitude of distrust, unbelief, and carnality into which Satan seduced the first human beings in the Garden of Eden. **Inordinate dependence upon physical, visible, fleshly, material signs of Gods presence is unbelief, no matter what you call it!** Jesus condemned such an attitude by saying, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign” (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). But Jesus praised the Roman centurion who believed in Jesus without any visible proof (Matt. 8:5-13) and told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed” (see Jn. 20:29; and 1 Pet. 1:8). **As a matter of fact, Jesus expects people to believe in him strictly on the basis of what has been written about him in the Gospels (Jn. 20:30-31)!** For the same unbelief as the Israelites, many religious groups today must have popes, denomination-presidents, vicars, priests, clergymen, “fathers,” delegates to conventions, cathedrals, shrines, relics, statues, etc., etc. Paul told the erudite philosophers in Athens that “ignorance” was what made men think God lived in shrines made by men or that God is like their idols of metal or stone (Acts 17:22-31). Paul told the Romans that those who demanded “images” or representations of God were “fools, senseless, and futile in their minds” (Rom. 1:18-32). Moses was absent! These carnal-minded Israelites quickly demonstrated their carnal desire to “be like the nations” and have a religion you could “see and touch.”

Aaron caved in to the request of the people because he wanted to do so! He certainly did not **have** to do so! He may have thought he had to. He may have been afraid of what the people might do to him if he had not. Surely Aaron had enough evidence of God’s power to deliver a believer from paganism (the deliverance from Pharaoh). Aaron also could depend on the support of Moses. It is also apparent the Levites would have sided with Aaron had he resisted. Aaron had no excuse when Moses asked, “What did the people do to you that you have bought a great sin upon them?” Aaron did say, “you know the people, that they are **set** on evil!” There does not seem to be any thing threatening in Aaron’s estimate of the people. He seems to be saying simply, “I could have done nothing to change their minds.” But is that an excuse for Aaron joining them? NO! It’s the old, “Everybody’s doing it” cop-out. And everybody was **not** doing it! Moses wasn’t—the Levites would not have—Aaron did not have to. Didn’t Aaron know about Noah, about Abraham? Didn’t he know about Amram and Jochebed, his own parents, and their courage and faith? Was Aaron not reared in the same house as Moses—with even less exposure to Egyptian idolatry than Moses? What made the difference between these two brothers? **Personal faith!** Perhaps the very fact that Moses had to struggle more for his faith than Aaron made Moses stronger. We must see that our children struggle with their faith and come to grips with God’s word in the face of opposition and testing!

Yes! It was proper for Moses to make intercession for the idolatrous Israelites. Remember Moses was from the priestly tribe of Levi. In fact, it appears that God was testing Moses to see if Moses would dare to fulfill his calling as mediator between God and this people God wanted to use for his redemptive purposes. God wanted to see if Moses would sacrifice the exalted position God promised him (to destroy Israel and make a new, great nation from Moses descendants) for the sake of a guilt-laden people and make intercession for them. Moses passed the test of pride and ambition. While Moses was

willing even (later 32:31-34) to be blotted out of God's book of life in order to make intercession for this sinful people. God did not answer Moses' request! Moses could not be a substitute for Israel. There is only one substitute acceptable by God for sinful mankind—that is Jesus Christ. Moses' intercession saved these Israelites, only temporarily. And his intercession worked for Moses' own salvation more than it did for that of the Israelites. That is true in our own case! God pardons no one who does not repent on their own—no matter how many prayers are said for them by others. One person cannot be baptized for another, nor can one repent for another! It is of no avail to pray for the dead! We should pray for the living if for no other reason than to make ourselves more godly! The same self-sacrificing attitude that Moses and Paul (Rom. 9:1-3) and others had is what we must have. But it is repentance that receives God's pardon. If these Israelites were pardoned at all it was because some of them (not 3000 of them anyway) repented. The Levites did!

Yes! I have wondered why Aaron was not slain with the 3000 (32:25-29). He lied, he blamed the sin on others, and he made some stupid statements. But evidently he repented. The Levites repented and took their stand with Moses. And what a repentance it was! Moses issued an ultimatum. Either you stand for Jehovah and do what he commands, no matter how drastic it may seem to you, or you will be destroyed. The Levites had the grisly task of slaying 3000 people, many of whom were their **own sons and brothers!** Family ties must not stand between a person and the Lord God (see Matt. 12:46-50; Lk. 12:52-53; 4:26; see also Mk. 3:34; Lk. 8:21). All that is necessary according to God's word to manifest repentance must be done by the believer, no matter how drastic, or how contrary to personal feelings, or opposed to the view of the world it may be. If one's right hand causes one to sin it would be better to cut it off than to go into hell with a right hand. If a man's wealth or health or home has become his god, he would be better off to lose it. For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul—even if he gains the whole world?

God did return to abide with the Israelites again (Ex. 40:34-38). God was with them throughout the remainder of the wilderness wanderings. He took them into the promised land. He dwelt with them there through the period of the judges and into the monarchy. He continued to reveal himself to them through Judges, Kings, and Prophets. God's patience with a rebellious nation such as Israel is marvelous and awesome to behold. God's patience mercy and grace run out only when it is spurned by people who *put themselves beyond* his covenant of *redemption*. There is a time when God forbids even praying for such people (Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 25:1; 16:5). There was a time when God departed from Israel (Ezek. 8:6; 9:3; 10:4,18) and declared he would not return until the period of "indignation" was over when the Messiah should come (Dan. 8:18—9:27) and until the "name of the city shall be, The Lord is there \'" (Ezek. 48:35). At that time the Lord came to his own incarnated in Jesus Christ, but his own received him not and so he declared his wrath upon them "unto the completion, perfect, end" (see 1 Thess. 2:16; Matt. 23:37-39; Matt. 24:1-35).

Moses had a very special relationship to God that few men ever had in OT times. He talked to God "face to face." Moses' magnificent obsession was to see more of the glory of God. He always wanted **more** of God. So God granted Moses' request—but not totally! Moses kept reminding God that he should deal graciously, but God reminded Moses that **he, God**, would decide, by his own sovereign choice, unmoved by any obsession by man, whom to show, and how much to show, of his grace in any given situation. God does not need man to direct him in his business (Isa. 40:13-14; Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16). It is man's business to seek God, to seek as much of God as God chooses to reveal, but it is not man's

business to tell God how much to reveal and how much to keep secret from man. Man is in no position to demand from God. Man is in a position only to receive. Man, in his fleshly state, cannot inherit the kingdom—he must allow God to change him through his word from mortality to immortality, from corruption to incorruption (1 Cor. 15).

The **terrible** thing God would do with Israel definitely has to do with the “marvels” such as had never been wrought in all the earth or in any nation which had been seen by human eyes. They are the great deliverance and supernatural deeds through which God sustained Israel (the unsettled, unmilitary, million and a half of nomad shepherds). God was going to dispossess many powerful, vicious, settled tribes and peoples just so these peripatetic Israelites could have their land. God tested the Israelites with 40 years of wandering, overcoming every obstacle in their path, to prepare them to inhabit their land. All this should terrify not only the enemies of Israel but Israel herself. She should stand in constant awe and fear of Jehovah so she will never be tempted again to commit apostasy and worship other gods (see Deut. 10:12-21; Psa. 145:1-6). It is possible for believers to become too familiar with almighty God! It is possible for believers to want to reduce the majestic sovereignty and awfulness of Jehovah. **Remember, the fear of God is the eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6-7).**

God prohibited **all** covenants between Israel and the Canaanites. God wants no “brotherhood” between the believer and the idolater. They were to make no treaties of peace, economic trade, religious toleration, nor any other kind of covenant with the Canaanites (read the book of Nehemiah to see what happened to them when they did). Nehemiah slapped them, and tore out their hair. Especially, they were not to intermarry. The Israelites were, in fact, to kill any Canaanites trying to stay in the land of Canaan (men, women and children). Tragically, Israel did not obey God. As a result, many millions of Israelites lost their eternal souls because of their disobedience. Christians are warned, “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (1 Cor. 6:14-18). Christians are to “come out from” unbelief and be separate from unbelievers, and touch nothing unclean (1 Cor. 6:17); Rev. 18:4). Pure religion is to keep oneself unstained from the world (James 1:27). The word **religion** is a Latin word meaning, “taboo, restraint, forbidden” and pure religion means being restrained from worldliness! To covenant with someone is to enter into a relationship of mutuality in mind-set, desire and action. The believer in God and Christ must not covenant with the mind-set of unbelievers. The Christian’s ambitions are those exclusively commanded by God in his word. The Christian thinks in terms of another world (the invisible world of spirituality and character).

God had to assure the Israelites that their land and their farms would be secure because they were not militarily strong when they entered the land of Canaan. Sure, they “drove out” their enemies, but only miraculously, by the evident supernatural intervention of God. They did not do it by their own power. Furthermore, they would be allowed to do no work on the Sabbath even at the most crucial times of the year for a farmer, plowing time and harvest time. These were times when the farmer would be in danger of losing his crop, and thus his farm. But God said, “No work on the Sabbath” even during those crucial times. God means for his commandments to be kept whether man thinks it is wise or not. Believers in Christ are not to be anxious for tomorrow, no matter how **crucial** the situation may be! Jesus had to meet this kind of test in his temptations, and continuously during his life on earth. Do we meet the test?

Moses put a veil on his face **after** the Israelites **saw** the face of Moses shining (Ex. 34:34-35). So, it was not put there to keep the Israelites from seeing the glow, or because it was so bright it blinded them. Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:7-18 that Moses put the veil on his face

so the Israelites would see the “*end*” of the glory that was *fading* away (2 Cor. 3:13). Paul used the **fading** glory of Moses’ face as a symbol of the fading glory of the Old Covenant that God had made with Moses. Moses (by God’s direction) did not want Israel to see that the Old Covenant was destined to fade. They were not yet ready to see that, he thought. Later, in the days of the prophets they would have its “fading” nature revealed to see (Jer. 3:15-16). Paul also used Moses’ veil to symbolize the hardening of the minds of the Israelites in rejected the Messiah (Christ) (2 Cor. 3:14-15). To this very day whenever Moses (the Law) is read in a Jewish synagogue, a veil lies upon the hearts of the Jews. This veil is removed only when they turn to the Christ of whom the law was but the symbol. Similar to the unveiled association Moses had with the Lord, so believers in Christ, by the Spirit of Christ through his word, view with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. And in the presence of that glory (constant association with it) we are transformed into the same image (of God’s dear Son, Jesus) from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18) until we eventually see him in all his glory and become like him as he is (1 Jn. 3:2).

EXODUS 35:1—40:38

God expects an offering to be willingly given even when he commands it to be given. In the same way, Jesus commands love and expects it to be given willingly. It is the same principle as patriotism. Every government demands patriotism and loyalty and they expect it to be given willingly. But when a nation expects loyalty to be given freely, it knows it deserves it because of services rendered! God has every right to command men to give as he has given to them. Jesus had every right to command his disciples to love him and one another as he had loved them. Be sure to read 1 Chron. 29:14-16. God owns everything and every person by right of creation and by right of redemption. Therefore, he can demand loyalty and sacrifice and expect it to be given willingly by the created and redeemed. To give to God with any other attitude is mockery, rebellion, and self-condemning. Giving willingly comes only when faith and repentance “stirs and moves” the human mind. **Faith and repentance captivates the human mind through the agency of the preached and/or read Word of God.** It does not come through coercion, or manipulation, or entertainment. While the church may get an offering through manipulated methods, it has done nothing for the one giving the offering but reinforce his condemnation before God!

The Israelites had their hearts “stirred” and their spirits “moved” by the Word of God as they heard it preached by Moses, saw it faithfully fulfilled by God’s deeds, and saw it exemplified in the life of Moses. There is no way their minds and their spirits could have been stirred through any other method or cause. It was not the need for a tabernacle that stirred and moved them. It was not by any crusade or gimmick. It was simply that Moses told them God commanded it! And they were finally ready to do what God commanded after acknowledging the sovereignty of Jehovah over their thinking. The Macedonians of 2 Cor. 8, “first gave themselves to the Lord and to the apostles, **by the will of God.**” Paul appealed to the Corinthians that their giving would be a “test of their obedience” (2 Cor. 9:13). This it is the preached will of God that stirs and moves.

God insisted that each Israelite have a willing mind to give of their “possessions” to build the Tabernacle so they would be **personally involved** in their loyalty to him. Human beings can’t just think about loyalty and be loyal—they have to **do something to express loyalty.** Faithfulness and love in a human marriage is not just something to think about and talk about—IT IS SOMETHING TO DO! Actions by which to express loyalty must be done or loyalty never becomes real. Paul tells the Corinthians that giving of their money to the Lord’s work was **proof of their love** (2 Cor. 8:24). God doesn’t need these actions for proof for himself, but he knows **we** need them to prove our loyalty to God for **ourselves** and for **other observers.** The Israelites needed some action to prove to themselves they were serving God as God wanted—and so do we! God clearly outlines the number of ways we may prove to ourselves we are serving him in the New Testament. We are to **build** the church (Eph. 2:21; 4:11-16).

Yes! All abilities and intelligence come from the Lord. God gives wisdom to those who give heed to his revealed word (he gave it to David, Solomon, Daniel, etal.), and he can take intelligence and abilities away from those who have contempt for his word (e.g. Sampson, Nebuchadnezzar, King Saul, etal). God even gives his creation for human beings to study in order to learn and have intelligence (Rom. 1:18-32; Psa. 19:1-14; Psa. 8:1-9, etc.). The person who studies creation (all aspects or any particular aspect) and does

not acknowledge that there is a God and that in knowing him there is found wisdom is a fool! God is the author and source of logic, and he expects human beings (created in his image with capacities to think, reason, judge, evaluate, make conclusions, make choices) to be logical. God controls circumstances and dispenses his providence (this we know from revealed prophecy) so that human must acknowledge all ability and intelligence comes from God. God has given his revelation in Jesus Christ to show that he controls abilities and intelligence. God has given us his revelation in human language to tell us that we must acknowledge all abilities and intelligence comes from him and ought to be used (as faithful stewards) to God's purposes and glory.

Apparently there is a point at which believers may give too much for a particular project in the Lord's work. But it is doubtful that believers ever give too much to the overall work of the Lord! Paul did not tell the Corinthians that the Macedonians gave too much even when they had given "beyond their means." Jesus did not say the widow who gave "all her living" had given too much! He did not think the rich, young, ruler would give too much by giving all he had. "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:33). Moses restrained the Israelites because they had enough for the Tabernacle. To give more for that project would not be good stewardship. God's stewards (and that is every believer) have to make wise decisions about **where** their money goes!

Moses had an inventory made of all the materials used in the Tabernacle because it was a matter of stewardship and accountability to God and to his fellow Israelites. God holds people accountable for every bit of his creation committed to human use and care! God will not tolerate irresponsibility! God will not tolerate waste! God will not tolerate extravagance and profligacy! The only extravagance pleasing to God is when we spend beyond our means in helping the helpless and needy. But self-indulgence and waste are an abomination to God. Jesus had his disciples gather up all the "left-overs" from the "fish-fry" when the 5000 were fed, "So that nothing be wasted." On the other hand the prodigal son is held up as an insult to his father for "wasting" his inheritance in a far country on riotous living. Remember also the **wicked servant** (Matt. 24:48-51). Moses own reputation as a leader in God's work was also at stake and he needed an inventory to establish his integrity (see Dan. 6:4).

Fifteen times in two chapters the phrase, "As the Lord commanded Moses" is repeated! Faith that is not obedient is no faith at all. Professed "faith" without obedience is only lip-service without the spirit in surrender to its Sovereign. Faith that is not obedient is really hidden rebellion—hypocrisy! Moses did exactly as God commanded. So did those working with Moses on the Tabernacle. Jesus equated unquestioning obedience with a faith that causes even deity to be astounded (Matt. 8:5-13). To obey is better than ritual, and disobedience is nothing more than idolatry and witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:22-23). When God told Uzzah not touch the ark of the covenant, God expected exact obedience (2 Sam. 6:3-8). When God told Achan not to take of the spoils of the Canaanites, he expected exact obedience (Josh. 7:1-24; 22:20). When God told Naaman to dip (Heb. *toval*, immerse) himself seven times in a precise spot (the Jordan River) he expected exact obedience. When God tells us something to do in the New Testament, he expects prompt, exact and intelligent obedience. We repeat comments from a previous lesson (Hebrews ch. 8)—God wanted the Tabernacle built exactly according to the pattern given Moses because it has to do with the redemption of mankind! So does what God tells us to obey in the New Testament! Christians are entrusted with God's redemptive work. They must obey exactly, promptly and intelligently. The eternal souls of people are at stake! God's honor is at stake!

God, through Moses, is as quick to show approval of obedience as he is to judge and punish disobedience. God knew all along that the Israelites **could** be obedient in **whatever he asked of them**. If they really wanted to obey, they could! God does not ask men to obey in anything in which they may be incapable of obeying. God wants to bless men—he did not send his Son to condemn the world but to save the world! God always blesses obedience! He blesses it in this life (not always in ways human beings classify as blessedness), and he will certainly bless it in the next life—beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Human beings have simply to believe and trust that what comes their way in the circumstances of this life are rewards for an obedient, believing life¹ the goal God seeks in every man's life is holiness, goodness—conformity to the character and nature of Christ. Every circumstance and association that brings about growth toward that spiritual goal is a blessing (even if it is poverty, illness, rebuke, encouragement, riches, health). What a human being must do is take intelligent actions with all his circumstances to see that they are conforming to the revealed word of God so they will proceed toward God's goal and thus be blessings and not curses.

The finishing of the work was attributed to Moses because had it not been for his faithfulness, humility and obedience, and leadership the rest of the people of God would not have made it. Godly leadership that is persevering, humble, obedient, and servant-oriented is imperative! God has ordained that such leadership be perpetuated in his church so long as this world stands (Eh. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:1-9). The church cannot function without it! It is an awesome **responsibility** (Heb. 13:7; 13:17; Acts 20:18-32). But, note, that even Moses had to wash before going into the presence of the Lord (Ex. 40:31). No human, not matter how great, is fit to stand before God and serve him unless first cleansed by the laver of regeneration! Not even Moses! Only **ONE**, by virtue of a sinless life, dares approach God without atonement—and that was the ONE who was the greatest servant of all, who made atonement for others—Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is the one who alone “finished” the redemptive work of God. Moses only finished the “shadow” and type. And all who “lead” in God's work today are not “finishers,” but merely servants (see Heb. 3:1-6). Human beings are servants **in** God's house—Jesus is **over** God's house as Sovereign Son.

Because of Moses' faithful leadership, the people repented and God returned to the Tabernacle with his divine glory. God keeps his word. When people surrender to his will, he “goes before them,” guides them and sustains them. But God withdrew his presence later when the people manifested they did not want him anymore (see Ezek. 8:6; 9:3; 10:4,18). Solomon's temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. and the ark of the covenant (the place where God's presence dwelt at the mercy seat) was never replaced (see Jer. 3:15-16). God's “indignation” (see Dan. 8:18—9:27) continued with the Jews through 490 years of “troubled times” in successive oppressive Gentile “over-lords” until the coming of the “Anointed One” (i.e., the Messiah) and God's glory returned to woo the Jews back to him. But the Jews rejected the glory of God in the person of his Son (Messiah). So, God rejected them finally and utterly (see Matt. 21:33-43; 23:37-39; 24:1-35; 2 Thess. 2:16, etc.) and accepts their repentance today only through confessing the deity of Christ and the efficacy of his vicarious sacrifice (see Heb. 6:1-20). Any attempt to be reconciled to God **except** through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ is **apostasy!** **God's presence dwells now in the church of Christ and will do so forever** (Eph. 2:11-22; Rev. 21:3ff.).

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

