# EXODUS

## BIBLE STUDY

*A Verse-by-Verse Study*



*God hears His people's cry: the Passover lamb, the parted sea, the covenant at Sinai, and His glory dwelling among them*

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TRINFINITY
Enterprises

# Exodus Bible Study

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Andrew Dominguez

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**Exodus Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study**

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# A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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# Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of Exodus. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

Exodus is a rescue story, and I know what it is to be rescued. God rescued me from myself and from my own destructive behaviors. I could not break those chains on my own. Like Israel, I needed Someone stronger to bring me out.

Exodus is the book of redemption. It tells how God heard the cry of His people in Egypt, broke the power of Pharaoh, saved Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb, brought them through the sea, gave them His Law at Mount Sinai and came to live among them in the tabernacle. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Exodus. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand how He saves His people and what He asks of them. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

*2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)*

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in Exodus. It picks up right where Genesis ends, with Jacob's family in Egypt, and it is built on God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (2:24; 6:3-8). It is history, written as history, and the rest of the Bible treats it that way. The prophets and psalmists look back to the exodus again and again (Psalm 78; Psalm 106; Hosea 11:1). Jesus spoke of Moses, the burning bush and the manna as real (Mark 12:26; John 6:31-32), and Paul wrote that these things happened to Israel as examples for us (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). Exodus also has a clear flow. The first part tells how God saved Israel. The second part tells how God made Israel His own people

and came to live among them. The Law in chapters 20 to 24 was given to a people God had already saved. It was never the way to be saved.

## Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

**Exegesis** means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

**Eisegesis** means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

**Hermeneutics** is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)*

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. Exodus is real history, and this study takes Moses at his word: Israel really was enslaved in Egypt, God really did send the plagues, the sea really did part, and God really did speak from Mount Sinai and fill the tabernacle with His glory. A note on the name of God: in the SLB, when you see "the LORD" in capital letters, it stands for God's personal name, YHWH, often written Yahweh, which He made known to Moses at the burning bush (3:14-15). When you see "Lord" in regular letters, it translates a word that means master. When you see "God," it usually translates Elohim, the general Hebrew word for God.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

## How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.

## Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Exodus has forty chapters, so here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: forty weeks, about a school year. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.
- Two chapters a week: about twenty weeks. This works well for the building chapters (35 to 40), which repeat much of chapters 25 to 31. Take the Passover (chapter 12), the Ten Commandments (chapter 20), the golden calf (chapter 32) and the LORD's name (chapter 34) one at a time, because they need the time.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of Exodus are hard. Pharaoh's order to kill the Hebrew baby boys (chapter 1), the plagues and the death of Egypt's firstborn (chapters 7 to 12), the drowning of Pharaoh's army (chapter 14), the laws about servants, injuries and the death penalty (chapters 21 and 22), and the

judgment after the golden calf (32:25-35) can raise honest questions about God's justice. The study handles each one plainly and with care, and points to what the rest of Scripture says. Some people in your group may have suffered at the hands of a cruel boss, a harsh parent or a broken system, and these chapters can stir that up. If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Exodus. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

# Overview of Exodus

Exodus is the second book of the Bible and the second of the five books of Moses, often called the Law or the Torah. The name Exodus comes from a Greek word meaning "going out" or "departure." The Hebrew title comes from the book's first words, "And these are the names," and it is often shortened to Shemot, which means names.

Genesis ends with Jacob's family in Egypt and Joseph in a coffin. Exodus opens about four hundred years later, when that family has become a great nation of slaves. It tells the central saving event of the Old Testament. God raises up Moses, judges Egypt with ten plagues, spares Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb and brings them out through the sea. At Mount Sinai He makes His covenant with them, gives them His Law and tells them to build the tabernacle, a portable tent where He would live among them. Even after Israel breaks the covenant with the golden calf, God shows His mercy, renews the covenant, and fills the finished tabernacle with His glory. For the rest of the Old Testament, the exodus is the event Israel looks back to when they remember who their God is (Psalm 77:15-20; Micah 6:4).

The theme of Exodus is redemption that leads to a relationship. God brings His people out of slavery so that they can belong to Him and so that He can live among them:

*Exodus 29:45-46 (SLB)*

"And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them. And they shall know that I ***am*** the LORD their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, that I might dwell in their midst; I ***am*** the LORD their God."

Exodus has 40 chapters and 1,213 verses. Here is its structure:

**Part One: Israel in Egypt and the Call of Moses (chapters 1 to 6)**

- Chapter 1: Israel Oppressed in Egypt
- Chapter 2: The Birth of Moses
- Chapter 3: The Burning Bush
- Chapter 4: Moses Returns to Egypt
- Chapter 5: Bricks Without Straw
- Chapter 6: I Am the LORD

**Part Two: The Plagues and the Passover (chapters 7 to 13)**

- Chapter 7: The Nile Turned to Blood
- Chapter 8: Frogs, Gnats, and Flies
- Chapter 9: Livestock, Boils, and Hail
- Chapter 10: Locusts and Darkness
- Chapter 11: The Last Plague Announced

- Chapter 12: The Passover
- Chapter 13: The Firstborn and the Pillar of Cloud

**Part Three: Through the Sea to Sinai (chapters 14 to 18)**

- Chapter 14: Crossing the Red Sea
- Chapter 15: The Song of Moses
- Chapter 16: Manna and Quail
- Chapter 17: Water From the Rock
- Chapter 18: Jethro's Counsel

**Part Four: The Covenant and the Law (chapters 19 to 24)**

- Chapter 19: Israel at Mount Sinai
- Chapter 20: The Ten Commandments
- Chapter 21: Laws on Servants and Injuries
- Chapter 22: Laws on Property and Justice
- Chapter 23: Justice, Sabbaths, and Feasts
- Chapter 24: The Covenant Confirmed

**Part Five: The Tabernacle Planned (chapters 25 to 31)**

- Chapter 25: The Ark, the Table, and the Lampstand
- Chapter 26: The Tabernacle
- Chapter 27: The Altar and the Courtyard
- Chapter 28: The Garments of the Priests
- Chapter 29: The Consecration of the Priests
- Chapter 30: The Incense Altar and the Atonement Money
- Chapter 31: Bezalel and the Sabbath Sign

**Part Six: The Golden Calf and the Covenant Renewed (chapters 32 to 34)**

- Chapter 32: The Golden Calf
- Chapter 33: The Presence of the LORD
- Chapter 34: The Covenant Renewed

**Part Seven: The Tabernacle Built (chapters 35 to 40)**

- Chapter 35: Gifts for the Tabernacle
- Chapter 36: Building the Tabernacle
- Chapter 37: The Ark and the Furnishings Made
- Chapter 38: The Altar, the Courtyard, and the Metals
- Chapter 39: The Priestly Garments Made

- Chapter 40: The Glory Fills the Tabernacle

Where this book points to Christ: the New Testament itself makes many of the links. Christ is "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7), the Lamb without blemish whose blood shields us from judgment, and not a bone of His was broken (12:46; John 19:36). Jesus called Himself the true bread from heaven, of which the manna was only a picture (John 6:32-35). Paul says the rock that gave Israel water was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). John says the Word "dwelt among us" (John 1:14), and the Greek word means He pitched His tent, the way God lived among Israel in the tabernacle. Hebrews 8 to 10 shows that the tabernacle, the priesthood and the sacrifices were copies and shadows of Christ, our great High Priest, whose one sacrifice opened the way into God's presence through the veil, His flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20). Jesus even took God's name from the burning bush, "I AM," for Himself (3:14; John 8:58). The book that tells of the first exodus points ahead to the greater one, when Christ by His death and resurrection set His people free from sin and death (Luke 9:31).

# Background of the Book

**Author:** Jewish and Christian tradition have long held that Moses wrote Exodus, along with the other books of the Law. The book itself says Moses wrote down God's words and events (17:14; 24:4; 34:27), and Jesus quoted Exodus as "the book of Moses" (Mark 12:26). Moses was there for nearly everything after chapter 2, and he was raised in Pharaoh's court, where he would have learned to read and write (Acts 7:22). Many modern scholars believe the books of the Law were put together from several sources long after Moses. I take the book at its word and hold that Moses wrote it, with perhaps a few later notes, such as updated place names, added by scribes.

**Who it was written to:** The people of Israel in the wilderness, and every generation after them. Exodus told Israel who had saved them, what He required of them, and how a holy God could live among a sinful people.

**Setting:** The book moves from the land of Goshen in the eastern Nile delta of Egypt, where Israel lived as slaves, to Midian in the desert, back to Egypt, across the sea, and through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, also called Horeb, in the Sinai Peninsula. Israel arrives at Sinai in chapter 19 and is still camped there at the end of the book.

**When it was written:** During Israel's forty years in the wilderness, about 1445 to 1405 B.C.

**When the events happened:** Exodus covers about four hundred years in Egypt, though most of it is told quickly, and then about one year in great detail, from the exodus to the day the tabernacle was set up (40:17). First Kings 6:1 says Solomon began building the temple in the 480th year after Israel came out of Egypt. That places the exodus about 1446 B.C., which is the date this study follows. Moses was eighty years old at the time (7:7), so he was born about 1526 B.C. Some scholars place the exodus in the 1200s B.C., in the days of Ramesses II, mostly because of the city named Rameses (1:11), but that name may be a later name for the place, given so later readers would know it. Exodus does not name the Pharaohs of the oppression or of the exodus, and I won't try to name them.

**Purpose:** To show that the LORD is the one true God, who keeps His covenant with Abraham, saves His people by the blood of a lamb and by His mighty hand, and calls them to be His own treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (19:5-6). Exodus also shows that the Law came after salvation, as God's way for a saved people to live, and that God's great desire is to dwell among His people.

# Chapter 1: Israel Oppressed in Egypt

## Scripture

**1:1-14** And these ***are*** the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each man and his household came: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls who came out of the thigh of Jacob were seventy souls; and Joseph was in Egypt. And Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. And the sons of Israel were fruitful, and they swarmed, and they multiplied, and they became mighty exceedingly, exceedingly; and the land was filled with them. And a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the sons of Israel ***is*** more numerous and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with it, lest it multiply, and it will be, when war happens, that it also will be added to those who hate us, and it will fight against us and go up from the land." And they set over it officers of forced labor so as to afflict it with their burdens; and it built storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Rameses. And just as they afflicted it, so it multiplied, and so it spread out; and they felt dread because of the sons of Israel. And Egypt made the sons of Israel serve with harshness, and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in bricks, and in all service in the field, all their service which they served through them, with harshness.

**1:15-22** And the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one ***was*** Shiphrah and the name of the second ***was*** Puah, and he said, "When you help the Hebrew women give birth, and you look on the stones, if it ***is*** a son, then you shall kill him; and if it ***is*** a daughter, then she shall live." And the midwives feared God, and they did not do just as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, and they let the boys live. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and he said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women ***are*** not like the Egyptian women; for they ***are*** vigorous; before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth." And God did good to the midwives; and the people multiplied, and they became very mighty. And it was, because the midwives feared God, that He made households for them. And Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son ***that is*** born, you shall throw him into the Nile, and every daughter you shall let live."

## Chapter 1 Preview

Genesis ended with Joseph's coffin in Egypt. Exodus picks up the story right there. Jacob's family of seventy people has grown into a great nation, just as God promised Abraham. But a new king rises who does not know Joseph, and he sees the growing people of Israel as a threat. He makes them slaves, works them hard and makes their lives bitter. The harder he presses, the more they grow.

When forced labor does not work, Pharaoh turns to murder. He orders the Hebrew midwives to kill every baby boy. Two brave women, Shiphrah and Puah, fear God more than they fear the king, and God blesses them for it. The chapter ends with a darker command: every Hebrew son is to be thrown into the Nile. This is the dark night before God's deliverance, and it is the setting for the birth of Moses in chapter 2.

## Chapter 1 Study

**1:1-5** *And these **are** the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each man and his household came: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls who came out of the thigh of Jacob were seventy souls; and Joseph was in Egypt.*

"And these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob." The book opens with the word "And," tying Exodus straight to Genesis. Moses lists the sons of Jacob, also called Israel, the twelve fathers of the twelve tribes. Joseph is set apart at the end because "Joseph was in Egypt" already.

"Seventy souls" came down to Egypt (Genesis 46:27). Stephen gives seventy-five in Acts 7:14, following the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which counted some of Joseph's descendants too. Either way, it was a small family. Remember that number. By the end of this chapter, seventy people have become a nation that frightens the king of Egypt.

**1:6-7** *And Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. And the sons of Israel were fruitful, and they swarmed, and they multiplied, and they became mighty exceedingly, exceedingly; and the land was filled with them.*

"And Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation." The men who saw God's hand in Joseph's day were gone. A generation passed, and then another.

But God's promise did not die with them. Look at the words Moses stacks up: they "were fruitful, and they swarmed, and they multiplied, and they became mighty exceedingly, exceedingly." These are the words of Genesis 1:28 and of God's promise to Abraham that his seed would be as many as the stars (Genesis 15:5). God told Jacob, "into a great nation I will make you there" (Genesis 46:3). In Egypt, that is what He did.

The people forgot Joseph. God did not forget His covenant. A covenant is a binding promise, and God's covenant with Abraham was a promise He made by Himself to give Abraham's descendants a land, make them a great nation and bless all nations through them (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18). Exodus is the story of God keeping that promise.

**1:8-10** *And a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the sons of Israel **is** more numerous and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with it, lest it multiply, and it will be, when war happens, that it also will be added to those who hate us, and it will fight against us and go up from the land."*

"And a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph." The Bible does not give this Pharaoh's name. Pharaoh was a title, like "king," not a personal name. Some scholars think this new king came from a new ruling family that had no reason to honor the memory of a Hebrew who had once saved Egypt. Scripture doesn't tell us which king it was, and I will not guess.

His fear was simple. The Hebrews had become "more numerous and mightier than we." If war came, they might side with Egypt's enemies and leave. So he said, "Come, let us deal wisely with

it." Worldly wisdom that sets itself against God's people always ends in folly. Pharaoh's plan to stop Israel from growing was a plan to stop God's promise, and no one can do that.

**1:11-14** *And they set over it officers of forced labor so as to afflict it with their burdens; and it built storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Rameses. And just as they afflicted it, so it multiplied, and so it spread out; and they felt dread because of the sons of Israel. And Egypt made the sons of Israel serve with harshness, and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in bricks, and in all service in the field, all their service which they served through them, with harshness.*

Pharaoh "set over it officers of forced labor so as to afflict it with their burdens." Israel built the storage cities of Pithom and Rameses, places to hold grain and supplies for Egypt's armies and trade. The name Rameses here is often taken as a later name for the city that readers would know, the way Genesis updates some place names.

Then comes one of the great surprises of the chapter: "just as they afflicted it, so it multiplied, and so it spread out." The more Egypt pressed, the more Israel grew. Pharaoh could make their lives hard. He could not make God's promise fail. The Egyptians "felt dread because of the sons of Israel."

So the oppression grew worse. The words "with harshness" frame verses 13 and 14. They made "their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in bricks, and in all service in the field." Later, at the Passover meal, Israel would eat bitter herbs to remember these days (12:8).

Have you ever been in a hard place that only seemed to get harder? Israel's suffering was real, and God did not wave it away. But God was not absent. He was keeping His word, even in the brick pits. God told Abraham ahead of time that his descendants would be strangers and slaves in a land not their own, and that afterward they would come out with great possessions (Genesis 15:13-14). The slavery was not a sign that God had failed. It was part of a story He had already told.

**1:15-16** *And the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one **was** Shiphrah and the name of the second **was** Puah, and he said, "When you help the Hebrew women give birth, and you look on the stones, if it **is** a son, then you shall kill him; and if it **is** a daughter, then she shall live."*

When forced labor failed, Pharaoh turned to murder. He spoke to "the Hebrew midwives," Shiphrah and Puah. Two women could hardly have served such a large people alone, so they may have been the leaders over the other midwives. Scripture gives their names and does not give Pharaoh's. God remembers the faithful.

The order was cold: "if it is a son, then you shall kill him; and if it is a daughter, then she shall live." Boys could grow up to be soldiers. Girls could be married off into Egyptian families and lost to Israel. Behind Pharaoh's plan was an older enemy. From Genesis 3:15 on, Satan has fought against the promised Seed of the woman. Here he tried to wipe out the line through which the Savior would come.

**1:17** *And the midwives feared God, and they did not do just as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, and they let the boys live.*

"And the midwives feared God." This is the key to the chapter. They feared God more than they feared the most powerful man on earth. They "did not do just as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, and they let the boys live."

This is one of the first examples in Scripture of godly civil disobedience. God sets up rulers, and we are to obey them (Romans 13:1). But when a ruler commands what God forbids, we must obey God. Peter and the apostles said the same thing centuries later: we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). These two women did not lead an army. They simply refused to kill babies, and God used them to protect a nation.

**1:18-19** *And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and he said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women **are** not like the Egyptian women; for they **are** vigorous; before the midwife comes to them, they have given birth."*

Pharaoh called them in and asked why they had let the boys live. Their answer was that the Hebrew women were "vigorous," and gave birth before the midwife arrived.

Was that a lie? Bible teachers have answered that in different ways. Some think it was at least partly true, since the Hebrew women were strong from hard labor and births were coming quickly. Others think the midwives deceived Pharaoh to protect the children. Notice what God blesses in the next verses. He blesses them because "the midwives feared God" (1:21), not for what they said to Pharaoh. Scripture records their answer without praising it or condemning it.

**1:20-21** *And God did good to the midwives; and the people multiplied, and they became very mighty. And it was, because the midwives feared God, that He made households for them.*

"And God did good to the midwives." God saw what they did in secret, and He rewarded them. "He made households for them," meaning He gave them families of their own. The women who protected other people's children were given children and homes.

Meanwhile, "the people multiplied, and they became very mighty." Pharaoh's second plan failed like the first.

God still sees quiet faithfulness. Most of us will never stand before a king. But we may be asked to go along with something we know is wrong, at work, at school or in our families. These two women show us that fearing God is not weakness. It is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), and God honors it.

**1:22** *And Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son **that is** born, you shall throw him into the Nile, and every daughter you shall let live."*

Now Pharaoh dropped the secret plan and made it public: "Every son that is born, you shall throw him into the Nile, and every daughter you shall let live." He commanded "all his people" to carry it out. The whole nation of Egypt was drawn into the crime.

The Nile was the life of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped it as a god of fertility. Pharaoh turned it into a grave for Hebrew babies. Keep this in mind when the first plague comes in chapter 7 and God turns the Nile to blood. God's judgments in Exodus are not random. He judges Egypt in the very places where Egypt sinned.

This verse also sets up chapter 2. The same river that was meant to kill Hebrew boys will carry one Hebrew boy into Pharaoh's own house. Centuries later another king, Herod, would try to kill the baby boys of Bethlehem to get rid of the promised King, and God would protect His Son (Matthew 2:13-16). The enemy keeps trying. God keeps His promise.

## Chapter 1 Summary

The sons of Jacob who came to Egypt numbered seventy. After Joseph and his generation died, the people of Israel multiplied greatly, as God had promised Abraham. A new king who did not know Joseph feared their numbers and made them slaves, forcing them to build the storage cities of Pithom and Rameses and making their lives bitter with hard labor. But the more they were oppressed, the more they grew. Pharaoh then ordered the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill the baby boys, but they feared God and let the boys live, and God gave them families of their own. Finally Pharaoh commanded all his people to throw every Hebrew son into the Nile.

## Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. How many people from Jacob's family came to Egypt, and what happened to them after Joseph died? (1:5-7)

2. Why was the new king of Egypt afraid of the sons of Israel? (1:8-10)

3. What happened to Israel the more the Egyptians afflicted them? (1:12)

4. What did Pharaoh order the midwives to do, and why did they refuse? (1:15-17)

5. How did God reward Shiphrah and Puah? (1:20-21)

6. What was Pharaoh's final command, and why is the Nile an important detail? (1:22)

7. How does Pharaoh's plan connect to God's promise of the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 and to Herod in Matthew 2:16?

8. The midwives obeyed God rather than the king (Acts 5:29). When should a believer refuse to obey a human authority, and how should we do it?

9. Israel grew even while suffering. Have you seen God work in your life during a hard time that kept getting harder?

10. Shiphrah and Puah were ordinary women who quietly did what was right. Where is God asking you to fear Him more than people this week?

# Chapter 2: The Birth of Moses

## Scripture

**2:1-10** And a man from the house of Levi went, and he took a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and she bore a son; and she saw him, that he ***was*** good, and she hid him three months. And she was not able to hide him any longer, and she took for him an ark of papyrus, and she coated it with bitumen and with pitch; and she put the child in it, and she put ***it*** among the reeds at the bank of the Nile. And his sister stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe at the Nile, and her young women ***were*** walking beside the Nile; and she saw the ark in the midst of the reeds, and she sent her maid, and she took it. And she opened ***it***, and she saw him, the child, and look, a boy crying! And she had compassion on him, and she said, "This ***is*** one of the children of the Hebrews." And his sister said to the daughter of Pharaoh, "Shall I go and call for you a nursing woman from the Hebrew women, so that she may nurse the child for you?" And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, "Go." And the young woman went, and she called the mother of the child. And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I, I will give your wages." And the woman took the child, and she nursed him. And the child grew up, and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he became a son to her. And she called his name Moses, and she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

**2:11-22** And it was in those days, and Moses grew up, and he went out to his brothers, and he looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, one of his brothers. And he turned this way and that way, and he saw that ***there was*** no man, and he struck the Egyptian, and he hid him in the sand. And he went out on the second day, and look, two Hebrew men ***were*** struggling together; and he said to the guilty one, "Why are you striking your companion?" And he said, "Who appointed you as a man, a ruler and a judge over us? ***Are*** you saying to kill me, just as you killed the Egyptian?" And Moses was afraid, and he said, "Surely the matter has become known." And Pharaoh heard this matter, and he sought to kill Moses; and Moses fled from before Pharaoh, and he dwelt in the land of Midian, and he sat by the well. And the priest of Midian ***had*** seven daughters; and they came, and they drew ***water***, and they filled the troughs to water the flock of their father. And the shepherds came, and they drove them away; and Moses arose, and he saved them, and he watered their flock. And they came to Reuel, their father, and he said, "Why have you hurried to come today?" And they said, "An Egyptian man delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and also he surely drew ***water*** for us, and he watered the flock." And he said to his daughters, "And where ***is*** he? Why ***is*** this, ***that*** you have left the man? Call him, so that he may eat bread." And Moses was willing to dwell with the man; and he gave Zipporah, his daughter, to Moses. And she bore a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "A sojourner I have become in a foreign land."

**2:23-25** And it was in those many days, and the king of Egypt died; and the sons of Israel groaned from the service, and they cried out, and their cry for help went up to God from the service. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God knew.

## Chapter 2 Preview

Pharaoh has ordered every Hebrew baby boy thrown into the Nile. Into that dark time a boy is born to a man and woman of the tribe of Levi. His mother hides him for three months, then puts him in a little basket among the reeds of the river. Pharaoh's own daughter finds him, takes pity on him and raises him as her son. She names him Moses. The river that was meant to be his grave becomes the road into Pharaoh's palace, and his own mother is paid to nurse him.

When Moses is grown, he tries to help his people in his own strength and kills an Egyptian. His own people reject him, Pharaoh tries to kill him, and he flees to the land of Midian. There he marries, has a son and lives as a shepherd for many years. The chapter closes with Israel crying out under their slavery, and with four short statements about God: He heard, He remembered, He saw and He knew.

## Chapter 2 Study

**2:1-2** *And a man from the house of Levi went, and he took a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and she bore a son; and she saw him, that he **was** good, and she hid him three months.*

"A man from the house of Levi went, and he took a daughter of Levi." Moses does not name his parents here. We learn later that they were Amram and Jochebed (6:20). The plain wording puts the focus on God's work, not on the family.

"She saw him, that he was good, and she hid him three months." Every mother thinks her baby is special, but Scripture says more. Stephen called Moses "beautiful to God" (Acts 7:20). Hebrews 11:23 says his parents hid him "by faith," and "they did not fear the edict of the king." This was not only a mother's love. It was faith in God, the same fear of God the midwives had in chapter 1.

**2:3-4** *And she was not able to hide him any longer, and she took for him an ark of papyrus, and she coated it with bitumen and with pitch; and she put the child in it, and she put **it** among the reeds at the bank of the Nile. And his sister stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him.*

After three months, a crying baby is hard to hide. So she "took for him an ark of papyrus, and she coated it with bitumen and with pitch." The Hebrew word for this basket, tevah, is used in only one other place in the Bible: for Noah's ark (Genesis 6:14). In both places, God saves a life through the water that brings death to others, in a box sealed with pitch.

She obeyed Pharaoh's order in a strange way. He said to put the boys in the Nile. She did, but in a waterproof basket, among the reeds near the bank, where she could watch over him. His sister, likely Miriam (15:20), "stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him." The family did what they could and left the rest with God.

**2:5-6** *And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe at the Nile, and her young women **were** walking beside the Nile; and she saw the ark in the midst of the reeds, and she sent her maid, and she took it. And she opened **it**, and she saw him, the child, and look, a boy crying! And she had compassion on him, and she said, "This **is** one of the children of the Hebrews."*

God's timing is perfect. "The daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe at the Nile." She saw the basket, sent her maid for it, and opened it. "And look, a boy crying!" She knew right away: "This is one of the children of the Hebrews."

"And she had compassion on him." Out of all the people in Egypt, the one person who could protect a Hebrew boy from Pharaoh was Pharaoh's daughter. The king's order was undone inside the king's own family. God often works this way. He does not always remove the danger. Sometimes He puts His people right in the middle of it and protects them there.

**2:7-9** *And his sister said to the daughter of Pharaoh, "Shall I go and call for you a nursing woman from the Hebrew women, so that she may nurse the child for you?" And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, "Go." And the young woman went, and she called the mother of the child. And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I, I will give your wages." And the woman took the child, and she nursed him.*

Miriam stepped forward with a bold idea: "Shall I go and call for you a nursing woman from the Hebrew women?" Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." So the girl went "and she called the mother of the child."

Picture that moment. Jochebed is handed her own son and told, "nurse him for me, and I, I will give your wages." She had given him up to God by the river, and God gave him back to her, safe, under royal protection, and she was paid to raise him. In those early years she surely taught him who he was and who his God was. Children in that world were often nursed until two or three years old or more, so she had time to shape him.

**2:10** *And the child grew up, and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he became a son to her. And she called his name Moses, and she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."*

"And the child grew up, and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he became a son to her." The name Moses sounds like a Hebrew word that means to draw out, and his adopted mother explains it: "Because I drew him out of the water." It also sounds like an Egyptian word for son, found in names like Thutmose.

Stephen says Moses "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). Egypt had the best schools of the day. God was preparing the man who would one day write the first five books of the Bible and lead a nation. Nothing in Moses' life was wasted, not even his years in Pharaoh's court.

**2:11-12** *And it was in those days, and Moses grew up, and he went out to his brothers, and he looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, one of his brothers. And he turned this way and that way, and he saw that* ***there was*** *no man, and he struck the Egyptian, and he hid him in the sand.*

Many years later (Stephen says Moses was about forty, Acts 7:23), Moses "went out to his brothers, and he looked on their burdens." He had grown up as a prince, but he knew who his people were. He "saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, one of his brothers."

"He turned this way and that way, and he saw that there was no man, and he struck the Egyptian." Moses looked around in every direction except one. He did not look up. He acted in anger and in his own strength. Hebrews 11:24-26 praises Moses for choosing to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin, so his heart was in the right place. But his method was wrong. God would deliver Israel, but not by one man's hidden violence.

**2:13-15** *And he went out on the second day, and look, two Hebrew men* ***were*** *struggling together; and he said to the guilty one, "Why are you striking your companion?" And he said, "Who appointed you as a man, a ruler and a judge over us?* ***Are*** *you saying to kill me, just as you killed the Egyptian?" And Moses was afraid, and he said, "Surely the matter has become known." And Pharaoh heard this matter, and he sought to kill Moses; and Moses fled from before Pharaoh, and he dwelt in the land of Midian, and he sat by the well.*

The next day Moses tried to stop two Hebrews from fighting. The guilty man turned on him: "Who appointed you as a man, a ruler and a judge over us?" Stephen draws out the meaning: Moses thought his brothers would understand that God was giving them deliverance through him, "but they did not understand" (Acts 7:25).

"Moses was afraid." Pharaoh heard about it "and he sought to kill Moses." Moses ran east to "the land of Midian," a region in the desert near the Gulf of Aqaba, home to descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Genesis 25:2).

Do you see the pattern? The man God sent to save Israel was first rejected by Israel. Stephen made this point to the leaders who had rejected Jesus (Acts 7:35). Like Moses, Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:11). And like Moses, He will one day be received by the people who first rejected Him.

**2:16-17** *And the priest of Midian* ***had*** *seven daughters; and they came, and they drew* ***water****, and they filled the troughs to water the flock of their father. And the shepherds came, and they drove them away; and Moses arose, and he saved them, and he watered their flock.*

"He sat by the well." Wells play a big part in the stories of Genesis. Abraham's servant found Rebekah at a well (Genesis 24), and Jacob met Rachel at a well (Genesis 29). Now Moses meets his future wife the same way.

The seven daughters of the priest of Midian came to water their father's flock, and some shepherds "drove them away." Moses "arose, and he saved them." Even in exile, Moses could not stand to see the weak pushed around. This time he did not kill anyone. He simply stood up for

them and then did the work himself, watering their flock. The angry prince is beginning to become a servant.

**2:18-20** *And they came to Reuel, their father, and he said, "Why have you hurried to come today?" And they said, "An Egyptian man delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and also he surely drew **water** for us, and he watered the flock." And he said to his daughters, "And where **is** he? Why **is** this, **that** you have left the man? Call him, so that he may eat bread."*

The girls' father is called Reuel here, and Jethro in 3:1. Reuel means friend of God. People in that world often had more than one name or title, and Jethro may have been a title, something like his excellency. Their father was surprised they were home so soon. They told him, "An Egyptian man delivered us from the hand of the shepherds." Moses looked and dressed like an Egyptian, so that is what they saw.

"Call him, so that he may eat bread." In the ancient Near East, it was shameful to leave a man who had helped you without offering a meal. Reuel's welcome opened the door to Moses' new life.

**2:21-22** *And Moses was willing to dwell with the man; and he gave Zipporah, his daughter, to Moses. And she bore a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "A sojourner I have become in a foreign land."*

"Moses was willing to dwell with the man," and Reuel gave him his daughter Zipporah as his wife. They had a son, and Moses "called his name Gershom." The name sounds like the Hebrew for a sojourner there. Moses explained it: "A sojourner I have become in a foreign land."

A sojourner is someone living in a land that is not his home. Moses was not at home in Egypt, and he was not at home in Midian. The patriarchs lived the same way, and Hebrews 11:13 says they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. Believers today live that way too (1 Peter 2:11). This world is not our final home.

Moses would spend about forty years in Midian (Acts 7:30). He went from the palace to the sheep pen. Those forty years taught him patience, humility and the desert roads he would one day lead Israel through.

**2:23** *And it was in those many days, and the king of Egypt died; and the sons of Israel groaned from the service, and they cried out, and their cry for help went up to God from the service.*

"And it was in those many days, and the king of Egypt died." Moses could have gone back, but God had not sent him yet. Meanwhile, in Egypt, nothing had changed for the slaves. "The sons of Israel groaned from the service, and they cried out, and their cry for help went up to God."

The verse does not say they cried out in faith or even that they cried out to God by name. They simply cried out in pain. And their cry "went up to God." God hears the cry of the suffering, even when they hardly know how to pray.

**2:24-25** *And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God knew.*

These two verses are the turning point of the opening chapters. Four short statements, each with God as the subject: "God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God knew."

"Remembered" does not mean God had forgotten. In the Bible, when God remembers, He acts on what He promised (Genesis 8:1). His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was about to move forward.

"And God knew." The verse ends almost abruptly. God knew their pain, their need and their names. If you are in a hard place today, this verse is for you. God hears, He remembers, He sees and He knows. His answer may be on the way already, as it was for Israel. While they groaned in Egypt, God was preparing a shepherd in Midian.

## Chapter 2 Summary

A Levite couple had a son during Pharaoh's order to kill the Hebrew boys. His mother hid him three months, then placed him in a sealed papyrus basket among the reeds of the Nile while his sister watched. Pharaoh's daughter found him, had compassion on him, and through his sister's quick thinking, hired his own mother to nurse him. She named him Moses because she drew him out of the water. As a grown man, Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, was rejected by his own people and fled from Pharaoh to Midian. There he defended the daughters of Reuel, the priest of Midian, married Zipporah and had a son named Gershom. Years later the king of Egypt died, Israel cried out under their slavery, and God heard, remembered His covenant, saw and knew.

Like Moses, I have tried many times to do things my own way and on my own timing. I tend to believe I can do anything myself instead of letting God lead. It rarely ends well. God's work goes better when I wait for His lead.

## Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. Why did Moses' mother hide him, and what does Hebrews 11:23 say about his parents? (2:2)

2. How did God use Pharaoh's daughter and Moses' sister to protect him? (2:5-9)

3. What does the name Moses mean, according to Pharaoh's daughter? (2:10)

4. What did Moses do when he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, and what was wrong with how he did it? (2:11-12)

5. How did the Hebrew man respond when Moses tried to stop the fight, and how does Stephen explain it in Acts 7:25? (2:13-14)

6. What did Moses do for the daughters of the priest of Midian? (2:16-17)

7. Why did Moses name his son Gershom? (2:22)

8. What four things does God do in verses 24 and 25, and why do they matter?

9. Moses tried to do God's work in his own way and his own timing. Have you ever done that? What happened?

10. Moses spent forty years in the desert before God sent him. What might God be teaching you in a season of waiting?

# Chapter 3: The Burning Bush

## Scripture

**3:1-10** And Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he drove the flock to the far side of the wilderness, and he came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush; and he looked, and look, the bush ***was*** burning with fire, and the bush ***was*** not consumed. And Moses said, "Let me turn aside, please, and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." And the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, and God called to him from the midst of the bush, and He said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I ***am***." And He said, "Do not draw near here; take off your sandals from on your feet, for the place on which you ***are*** standing, it ***is*** ground of holiness." And He said, "I ***am*** the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. And the LORD said, "I have certainly seen the affliction of My people who ***are*** in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of its taskmasters, for I know its pains. And I have come down to deliver it from the hand of Egypt, and to bring it up from that land to a land good and spacious, to a land flowing ***with*** milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. And now, look, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; and also I have seen the oppression ***with*** which Egypt ***is*** oppressing them. And now, go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring out My people, the sons of Israel, from Egypt."

**3:11-22** And Moses said to God, "Who ***am*** I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt?" And He said, "Surely I will be with you; and this ***shall be*** the sign for you that I, I have sent you: when you bring out the people from Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." And Moses said to God, "Look, I ***am*** going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they will say to me, 'What ***is*** His name?' What shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" And God said again to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This ***is*** My name forever, and this ***is*** My memorial to generation ***after*** generation. Go, and gather the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I have certainly visited you and ***seen*** what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have said, I will bring you up from the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing ***with*** milk and honey."' And they will listen to your voice; and you shall go, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God.' And I, I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, and not by a strong hand. And I will stretch out My hand, and I will strike Egypt with all My marvels which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. And I will give the favor of this people in the eyes of Egypt; and it will be, when you go, you will not go empty. And ***each*** woman shall ask from her neighbor and from the

sojourner of her house articles of silver and articles of gold and clothes; and you shall put ***them*** on your sons and on your daughters; and you shall plunder Egypt."

## Chapter 3 Preview

Moses has spent forty years as a shepherd in Midian. One ordinary day, at the mountain of God called Horeb, he sees a bush that burns but does not burn up. When he turns aside to look, God calls him by name from the fire. The ground is holy. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has seen His people's suffering, heard their cry, and come down to deliver them. And He is sending Moses.

Moses pushes back. Who is he to go to Pharaoh? God answers with a promise: "Surely I will be with you." When Moses asks God's name, God reveals Himself as I AM WHO I AM, and gives His personal name, the LORD. God then lays out the plan: gather the elders, go to Pharaoh, expect him to refuse, watch God strike Egypt, and leave with the wealth of Egypt. This chapter is one of the most important in the Old Testament, because here God tells us who He is.

## Chapter 3 Study

**3:1** *And Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he drove the flock to the far side of the wilderness, and he came to the mountain of God, to Horeb.*

"Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law." The prince of Egypt was now taking care of someone else's sheep. Forty years had gone by (Acts 7:30). Moses was about eighty years old (7:7).

He "came to the mountain of God, to Horeb." Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where God would later give the Law. Moses calls it "the mountain of God" because of what happened there, even though he did not know it yet.

God often calls people in the middle of ordinary work. Gideon was threshing wheat (Judges 6:11). David was keeping sheep (1 Samuel 16:11). Peter and Andrew were fishing (Matthew 4:18). Faithfulness in small things is often the place where God meets us.

**3:2-3** *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush; and he looked, and look, the bush **was** burning with fire, and the bush **was** not consumed. And Moses said, "Let me turn aside, please, and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."*

"And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush." In verse 4 the One speaking from the bush is called "the LORD" and "God," and in verse 6 He says, "I am the God of your father." So this angel is not an ordinary angel. Many Bible teachers believe the angel of the LORD is the Son of God appearing before He was born in Bethlehem. Stephen tells this same story and says the angel spoke as the Lord (Acts 7:30-32).

"The bush was burning with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Fire in the Bible often shows God's holy presence (19:18; Hebrews 12:29). The bush kept burning because the fire did not need

it for fuel. God needs nothing from anyone. Many have also seen in the bush a picture of Israel, a small, humble people in the fire of affliction, yet not destroyed, because God was in the midst.

Moses said, "Let me turn aside, please, and see this great sight." He was curious, and he made time to look.

**3:4** *And the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, and God called to him from the midst of the bush, and He said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I **am**."*

"And the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look." God waited for Moses to stop and pay attention. Then God called, "Moses, Moses!" Calling a name twice shows warmth and urgency, as with "Abraham, Abraham" (Genesis 22:11). God knew Moses by name, even after forty years in the desert.

Moses answered, "Here I am," the same words Abraham used. How often do we miss God because we never turn aside to look? Busy lives can keep us from ever stopping long enough to hear Him.

**3:5-6** *And He said, "Do not draw near here; take off your sandals from on your feet, for the place on which you **are** standing, it **is** ground of holiness." And He said, "I **am** the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

"Do not draw near here; take off your sandals from on your feet, for the place on which you are standing, it is ground of holiness." There was nothing special about the dirt. It was holy because God was there. Holy means set apart, wholly different from everything common and sinful. Taking off his sandals was a sign of respect and humility before a holy God. Joshua would be told the same thing (Joshua 5:15).

God then named Himself: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus used this verse to prove the resurrection. God says "I am" their God, not "I was," so Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive to Him, because He is not the God of the dead but of the living (Mark 12:26-27).

"And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." This is the right response to God's holiness. Moses was not a curious tourist any more. He was a sinner in the presence of a holy God.

**3:7-9** *And the LORD said, "I have certainly seen the affliction of My people who **are** in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of its taskmasters, for I know its pains. And I have come down to deliver it from the hand of Egypt, and to bring it up from that land to a land good and spacious, to a land flowing **with** milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. And now, look, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; and also I have seen the oppression **with** which Egypt **is** oppressing them.*

Now God tells Moses why He came. Notice the warm, personal words: "I have certainly seen the affliction of My people," "I have heard their cry," "I know its pains." This picks up 2:24-25. Israel's cry had reached the heart of God.

"And I have come down to deliver it." God does not watch from far away. He comes down. This points ahead to the greatest coming down of all, when the Son of God came down from heaven to save us (John 6:38).

God would bring them "to a land good and spacious, to a land flowing with milk and honey." That phrase describes rich pasture for herds and plenty of flowers for bees. It was the land of the Canaanite peoples, the land God promised Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21).

**3:10** *And now, go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring out My people, the sons of Israel, from Egypt."*

"And now, go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring out My people." Here is the turn. God says, I have come down to deliver them, and you go. God works through people. He could have freed Israel with no human help, but He chose to use Moses.

Forty years earlier, Moses tried to save Israel on his own and failed. Now God sends him. The difference is everything. The work of God done in God's way and in God's time, with God's call behind it, cannot fail.

**3:11-12** *And Moses said to God, "Who **am** I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt?" And He said, "Surely I will be with you; and this **shall be** the sign for you that I, I have sent you: when you bring out the people from Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."*

"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" Moses had lost the confidence of his younger years. He knew what Egypt was like, and he knew what had happened last time. This is the first of five objections Moses will raise in chapters 3 and 4.

God's answer does not tell Moses who he is. It tells him who is with him: "Surely I will be with you." The question is never really, Who am I? The question is, Who is with me? Jesus gave His disciples the same promise when He sent them into the world: "I am with you all the days" (Matthew 28:20).

God also gave Moses a sign: "when you bring out the people from Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." It was a sign that could only be seen after Moses obeyed. Faith steps out first. In chapter 19, Moses will stand at this same mountain with all Israel.

**3:13** *And Moses said to God, "Look, I **am** going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they will say to me, 'What **is** His name?' What shall I say to them?"*

Moses' second objection: "What is His name?" He asked, "What shall I say to them?" In the ancient world, a name told something about the one who carried it. The people would want to know what kind of God had sent Moses, and whether He could stand against the gods of Egypt.

**3:14** *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

"And God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM." This is one of the deepest statements in the Bible. God does not need anything outside Himself to exist. He always was, He is, and He always will be. He does not change. He is not defined by anything we say about Him. He simply is.

God told Moses to tell Israel, "I AM has sent me to you." The God who sent Moses was not one of many gods. He is the One who exists in Himself, the source of all life.

Jesus took this name for Himself. When the Jewish leaders challenged Him, He said, "before Abraham came into being, I am" (John 8:58), and they picked up stones to kill Him, because they understood He was claiming to be God. The God who spoke from the bush is the One who stood before them in the flesh.

**3:15** *And God said again to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This My name forever, and this **is** My memorial to generation **after** generation.*

"The LORD, the God of your fathers." The name translated "the LORD" in capital letters is God's personal name. In Hebrew it is four letters, YHWH, usually written Yahweh. It comes from the Hebrew verb "to be," and it is connected to "I AM" in verse 14. Out of respect, Jewish readers stopped saying the name aloud and read "Lord" instead, which is why most English Bibles, including the SLB, print it as the LORD.

"This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to generation after generation." God has not changed His name. He is still the LORD, the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And He is the God of everyone who comes to Him by faith in Jesus Christ.

**3:16-17** *Go, and gather the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I have certainly visited you and **seen** what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have said, I will bring you up from the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing **with** milk and honey."'*

God gave Moses his orders. First, "gather the elders of Israel," the older men who led the tribes and families. Tell them that the LORD has appeared and says, "I have certainly visited you." To visit, in the Bible, often means to come and act, either in blessing or in judgment. Joseph had told his brothers on his deathbed, "God will certainly visit you, and He will bring you up from this land" (Genesis 50:24). Now that word was coming true.

God repeats the promise of the land in verse 17. He wants Moses and the people to hear it again and again.

**3:18** *And they will listen to your voice; and you shall go, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God.'*

"And they will listen to your voice." God told Moses ahead of time that the elders would listen. Then Moses and the elders were to go to Pharaoh and ask, "please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God."

Why ask for only three days if God meant to take them out for good? Some think this was a fair first request that showed how hard Pharaoh's heart was. If he would not allow even this small thing, he would never let them go for good. God was not lying. A trip to worship was the first step, and God never said they would come back. Pharaoh's refusal of a small, reasonable request showed his heart.

**3:19-20** *And I, I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, and not by a strong hand. And I will stretch out My hand, and I will strike Egypt with all My marvels which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go.*

"And I, I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go." God told Moses the truth from the start. Pharaoh would say no. The SLB's "and not by a strong hand" means Pharaoh would not give in even under heavy pressure, at least not at first.

But God said, "I will stretch out My hand, and I will strike Egypt with all My marvels." Pharaoh's strong hand would meet God's stronger hand. "And after that he will let you go." God told Moses the end before the beginning. When God gives us a hard task, He often tells us it will be hard, so that we will not lose heart when it is.

**3:21-22** *And I will give the favor of this people in the eyes of Egypt; and it will be, when you go, you will not go empty. And **each** woman shall ask from her neighbor and from the sojourner of her house articles of silver and articles of gold and clothes; and you shall put **them** on your sons and on your daughters; and you shall plunder Egypt."*

"It will be, when you go, you will not go empty." God promised Abraham that his descendants would come out of their slavery "with great possessions" (Genesis 15:14). Here God tells Moses how. Each Israelite woman would ask her Egyptian neighbors for silver, gold and clothing, and the Egyptians would give it. "You shall plunder Egypt."

This was not stealing. It was back pay for four hundred years of slave labor, given freely by people God moved to give. Later, much of this gold and silver would be given for building the tabernacle (35:22). God provided ahead of time for the worship He was about to command.

## Chapter 3 Summary

While tending Jethro's flock at Horeb, the mountain of God, Moses saw a bush burning without being consumed. When he turned aside to look, God called to him from the bush, told him to remove his sandals because the ground was holy, and named Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God said He had seen His people's affliction, heard their cry and come down to deliver

them and bring them into a good land flowing with milk and honey, and He was sending Moses to Pharaoh. Moses asked, "Who am I?" and God promised to be with him. When Moses asked God's name, God answered, "I AM WHO I AM," and gave His name, the LORD, as His name forever. God told Moses to gather the elders, ask Pharaoh to let Israel go to worship, and expect Pharaoh to refuse until God struck Egypt. Israel would not leave empty-handed.

## Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What was Moses doing when God appeared to him, and where was he? (3:1)

2. What was unusual about the bush, and what did Moses decide to do? (3:2-3)

3. Why did God tell Moses to take off his sandals? (3:5)

4. What did God say He had seen, heard and known about His people? (3:7-9)

5. What was Moses' first objection, and how did God answer it? (3:11-12)

6. What name did God give Himself, and how did Jesus use that name in John 8:58? (3:14-15)

7. What did God say Pharaoh would do, and what would God do in return? (3:19-20)

8. How did Jesus use 3:6 to teach about the resurrection? (Mark 12:26-27)

9. Moses had to turn aside to see what God was doing. What keeps you from slowing down to listen to God?

10. When you feel like saying "Who am I?" to something God has put in front of you, how does His answer, "Surely I will be with you," change things?

# Chapter 4: Moses Returns to Egypt

## Scripture

**4:1-17** And Moses answered, and he said, "And look, they will not believe me, and they will not listen to my voice; for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" And the LORD said to him, "What ***is*** this in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." And He said, "Throw it to the ground." And he threw it to the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand, and grasp its tail." And he stretched out his hand, and he seized it, and it became a staff in his hand, "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." And the LORD said to him again, "Please put your hand into your bosom." And he put his hand into his bosom, and he brought it out, and look, his hand ***was*** leprous like snow. And He said, "Return your hand into your bosom." And he returned his hand into his bosom, and he brought it out from his bosom, and look, it had turned back like his flesh. "And it will be, if they will not believe you and will not listen to the voice of the first sign, then they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it will be, if they will not believe even these two signs and will not listen to your voice, then you shall take some of the water of the Nile, and you shall pour ***it*** on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become, it will become blood on the dry ground." And Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon me, Lord, I ***am*** not a man of words, neither from yesterday nor from the day before, nor since You spoke to Your servant; for I ***am*** heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." And the LORD said to him, "Who has made a mouth for mankind? Or who makes ***one*** mute or deaf or seeing or blind? ***Is it*** not I, the LORD? And now, go, and I, I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you shall speak." And he said, "Pardon me, Lord, please send by the hand of ***whomever*** You will send." And the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "***Is*** not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he, he surely speaks. And also, look, he ***is*** coming out to meet you; and he will see you, and he will be glad in his heart. And you shall speak to him, and you shall put the words in his mouth; and I, I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. And he, he shall speak for you to the people; and it will be ***that*** he, he will be a mouth for you, and you, you will be ***in the place of*** God to him. And this staff you shall take in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

**4:18-31** And Moses went, and he returned to Jethro, his father-in-law, and he said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brothers who ***are*** in Egypt, and let me see whether they ***are*** still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life have died." And Moses took his wife and his sons, and he made them ride on the donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the staff of God in his hand. And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go to return to Egypt, see all the wonders which I have put in your hand, and you shall do them before Pharaoh; and I, I will strengthen his heart, and he will not let the people go. And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel ***is*** My son, My firstborn. And I said to you, 'Let My son go, so that he may serve Me'; and you refused to let him go. Look, I ***am*** about to kill your son, your firstborn."'" And it was on the way, at the lodging place, and the LORD met him, and He sought to kill him. And Zipporah took a flint, and she cut off the foreskin of her son, and she made ***it*** touch his feet; and she said,

"Surely a bridegroom of blood you ***are*** to me." And He withdrew from him. Then she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision. And the LORD said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses into the wilderness." And he went, and he met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went, and they gathered all the elders of the sons of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and he did the signs before the eyes of the people. And the people believed; and they heard that the LORD had visited the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, and they bowed low and worshiped.

## Chapter 4 Preview

Moses is still at the burning bush, and he still does not want to go. He worries that the people will not believe him, so God gives him three signs: a staff that becomes a snake, a hand that turns leprous and is healed, and water from the Nile that turns to blood. Then Moses says he is not a good speaker, and God reminds him who made his mouth. Finally Moses simply asks God to send someone else. God is angry, but He gives Moses his brother Aaron to speak for him.

Moses then leaves Midian with his family and heads for Egypt. On the way, God warns that Pharaoh will refuse, and that Israel is His firstborn son. In a short and puzzling scene, the LORD meets Moses at a lodging place and seeks to kill him, until Zipporah circumcises their son. Aaron meets Moses at the mountain of God, the two of them gather Israel's elders, and the people believe and worship.

## Chapter 4 Study

**4:1** *And Moses answered, and he said, "And look, they will not believe me, and they will not listen to my voice; for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"*

Moses' third objection: "they will not believe me, and they will not listen to my voice." God had already said in 3:18 that the elders would listen. Moses was not just asking a question. He was doubting what God had told him.

Many of us have been there. God's Word says one thing, and our fears say another. Moses' fear was natural, since his own people had rejected him once before (2:14). But God is patient with honest weakness, and He answers Moses again.

**4:2-5** *And the LORD said to him, "What **is** this in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." And He said, "Throw it to the ground." And he threw it to the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand, and grasp its tail." And he stretched out his hand, and he seized it, and it became a staff in his hand, "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."*

"What is this in your hand?" It was just "A staff," a shepherd's stick. God told him to throw it down, and "it became a snake; and Moses fled from before it." Then God told him to pick it up by the tail, the most dangerous way to grab a snake, and it became a staff again.

The snake was a symbol of Egypt's power. Pharaoh's crown carried the image of a cobra. God was showing Moses that He was in control of Egypt's power, and that Moses could grasp it by faith.

God also asks us, What is in your hand? He usually uses what we already have. A shepherd's staff, given to God, became "the staff of God" (4:20). The sign had a purpose: "so that they may believe" that the LORD had appeared to Moses.

**4:6-8** *And the LORD said to him again, "Please put your hand into your bosom." And he put his hand into his bosom, and he brought it out, and look, his hand **was** leprous like snow. And He said, "Return your hand into your bosom." And he returned his hand into his bosom, and he brought it out from his bosom, and look, it had turned back like his flesh. "And it will be, if they will not believe you and will not listen to the voice of the first sign, then they will believe the voice of the latter sign.*

The second sign: Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, "his hand was leprous like snow." When he put it back and took it out again, it was healed. Leprosy in the Bible covers several skin diseases, and it was greatly feared. It made a person unclean (Leviticus 13). Only God could heal it.

The sign showed that God had power over life and health, to strike and to heal. It may also have reminded Moses that God could make him clean, whatever he carried from his past. If the people did not believe the first sign, God said, "then they will believe the voice of the latter sign." God speaks through signs as well as words.

**4:9** *And it will be, if they will not believe even these two signs and will not listen to your voice, then you shall take some of the water of the Nile, and you shall pour **it** on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become, it will become blood on the dry ground."*

A third sign was held in reserve. If the people still did not believe, Moses was to pour water from the Nile on dry ground, and it would "become blood on the dry ground." This sign looks ahead to the first plague (7:20). The Nile, Egypt's source of life and the place where Hebrew boys were drowned (1:22), would become blood. God gave Moses a small sample of the judgment to come.

**4:10-12** *And Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon me, Lord, I **am** not a man of words, neither from yesterday nor from the day before, nor since You spoke to Your servant; for I **am** heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." And the LORD said to him, "Who has made a mouth for mankind? Or who makes **one** mute or deaf or seeing or blind? **Is it** not I, the LORD? And now, go, and I, I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you shall speak."*

Moses' fourth objection: "I am not a man of words." He said he was "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." We don't know exactly what he meant. Some think he had a speech problem. Others think he meant he was out of practice after forty years with sheep, or that he no longer spoke Egyptian well. Stephen says Moses had been "mighty in words and in deeds" in Egypt (Acts 7:22), so the problem may have been more fear than ability.

God's answer is strong: "Who has made a mouth for mankind? Or who makes one mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" God made Moses, weaknesses and all. Our limits do not surprise Him.

"And now, go, and I, I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you shall speak." Jesus gave His disciples a similar promise when they would stand before rulers (Luke 12:11-12). God does not wait until we are gifted enough. He sends us and goes with us.

**4:13-14** *And he said, "Pardon me, Lord, please send by the hand of **whomever** You will send." And the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "**Is** not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he, he surely speaks. And also, look, he **is** coming out to meet you; and he will see you, and he will be glad in his heart.*

Now the real problem comes out: "Pardon me, Lord, please send by the hand of whomever You will send." In plain words, send someone else. This is not humility any more. It is refusal.

"And the anger of the LORD burned against Moses." God had been patient through four objections. He answered every one. The fifth was not a question but a no. God's patience is great, but He is not pleased when we simply refuse Him.

Even in His anger, God made a way. "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he, he surely speaks." Aaron was already on his way to meet Moses, and "he will be glad in his heart." God had arranged this before Moses ever asked.

**4:15-17** *And you shall speak to him, and you shall put the words in his mouth; and I, I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. And he, he shall speak for you to the people; and it will be **that** he, he will be a mouth for you, and you, you will be **in the place of** God to him. And this staff you shall take in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."*

God laid out how it would work. Moses would put the words in Aaron's mouth, and Aaron would speak to the people. "He, he will be a mouth for you, and you, you will be in the place of God to him." Moses would receive God's words, and Aaron would pass them on, much as a prophet passes on God's words to the people (7:1).

God's plan with Aaron brought blessing, and it also brought trouble. Aaron would one day make the golden calf (chapter 32). Second best often brings its own problems. Still, God used both brothers.

"And this staff you shall take in your hand, with which you shall do the signs." The plain shepherd's stick would be the tool of God's wonders in Egypt.

**4:18** *And Moses went, and he returned to Jethro, his father-in-law, and he said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brothers who **are** in Egypt, and let me see whether they **are** still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."*

Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law, and asked permission to return to Egypt, "and let me see whether they are still alive." Moses did not tell Jethro everything. He showed respect for the man who had given him a home for forty years. Jethro answered, "Go in peace."

Moses obeyed God, but he also honored the people in his life. Following God's call does not give us permission to be rude or careless with others.

**4:19-20** *And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life have died." And Moses took his wife and his sons, and he made them ride on the donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the staff of God in his hand.*

God gave Moses one more word of comfort: "all the men who were seeking your life have died." The danger that drove Moses from Egypt was gone.

So "Moses took his wife and his sons" and set out for Egypt. Only one son, Gershom, has been named so far. The second, Eliezer, is named in 18:4. The verse ends, "Moses took the staff of God in his hand." It was the same staff as before. But now it belonged to God.

**4:21** *And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go to return to Egypt, see all the wonders which I have put in your hand, and you shall do them before Pharaoh; and I, I will strengthen his heart, and he will not let the people go.*

God told Moses ahead of time what to expect: do all the wonders before Pharaoh, "and I, I will strengthen his heart, and he will not let the people go."

This is the first time Exodus speaks of Pharaoh's heart being hardened. The SLB says strengthened here, and other verses say made heavy. Exodus says both that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32). In the first plagues, Pharaoh hardens himself. Later, God confirms what Pharaoh had chosen. God did not take a tender heart and force it to be cruel. Pharaoh was already a proud man who said, "I do not know the LORD" (5:2). God gave him over to his own choice, and used it to show His power (9:16; Romans 9:17). We will see this more as the plagues go on.

**4:22-23** *And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel **is** My son, My firstborn. And I said to you, 'Let My son go, so that he may serve Me'; and you refused to let him go. Look, I **am** about to kill your son, your firstborn."'"*

"Israel is My son, My firstborn." The firstborn son was the heir, the one who received a double portion and the father's special care. God claimed Israel as His own. Hosea 11:1 says, "out of Egypt I called My son," and Matthew applies those words to Jesus, God's true Son, who came out of Egypt as a child (Matthew 2:15).

"Let My son go, so that he may serve Me." Freedom from Egypt was freedom to serve God. That is the point of the exodus, and it is the point of our salvation too. We are set free from sin so that we can serve the living God.

Then comes the warning: "Look, I am about to kill your son, your firstborn." Pharaoh was holding God's firstborn as a slave and had killed Israel's sons. If he would not let God's firstborn go, he would lose his own. This warning is fulfilled in the tenth plague (12:29).

**4:24-26** *And it was on the way, at the lodging place, and the LORD met him, and He sought to kill him. And Zipporah took a flint, and she cut off the foreskin of her son, and she made **it** touch his feet; and she said, "Surely a bridegroom of blood you **are** to me." And He withdrew from him. Then she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.*

This is one of the hardest passages in Exodus. "At the lodging place, and the LORD met him, and He sought to kill him." Who is "him"? Most take it to mean Moses. Zipporah quickly "took a flint, and she cut off the foreskin of her son." Then the LORD let him go.

Why would God do this? Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and any male not circumcised was to be cut off from God's people (Genesis 17:10-14). Moses, the man sent to lead God's covenant people, had not given his own son the covenant sign. Maybe Zipporah had objected, since her words sound unhappy: "Surely a bridegroom of blood you are to me." God would not let the leader of His people ignore His covenant at home while calling others to obey it.

Scripture does not tell us much more, and good Bible teachers read some details differently. What is clear is this: God takes His covenant seriously, and leaders must first obey in their own homes what they ask others to do. Moses seems to have sent Zipporah and the boys back to Jethro after this, because they come back to him in 18:2-3.

**4:27-28** *And the LORD said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses into the wilderness." And he went, and he met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.*

God spoke to Aaron in Egypt: "Go to meet Moses into the wilderness." Aaron obeyed, met Moses "at the mountain of God, and he kissed him." Two brothers, one raised in Pharaoh's palace and one raised as a slave, met after forty years at the very mountain where God had called Moses. God had been working in both places at once.

Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had said and all the signs. They now shared the same calling.

**4:29-31** *And Moses and Aaron went, and they gathered all the elders of the sons of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and he did the signs before the eyes of the people. And the people believed; and they heard that the LORD had visited the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, and they bowed low and worshiped.*

They gathered the elders, and Aaron spoke all of God's words and did the signs "before the eyes of the people."

"And the people believed." Moses' fear in verse 1 never came true. God had said they would listen (3:18), and they did. How much worry would we save ourselves if we simply took God at His word?

"They heard that the LORD had visited the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, and they bowed low and worshiped." The first response of God's people to His promise of salvation was worship. Nothing had changed yet in their outward life. They were still slaves. But God had spoken, and that was enough to make them bow.

## Chapter 4 Summary

Moses objected that the people would not believe him, so God gave him three signs: his staff became a snake and then a staff again, his hand turned leprous and was healed, and Nile water poured on the ground would become blood. When Moses said he was not eloquent, God reminded him that He made the mouth and promised to teach him what to say. When Moses asked God to send someone else, God was angry but appointed Aaron to speak for him. Moses returned to Egypt with his family and the staff of God. God told him Pharaoh would refuse and that Israel was His firstborn son, and warned that Pharaoh's firstborn would die. At a lodging place the LORD sought to kill Moses until Zipporah circumcised their son. Aaron met Moses at the mountain of God, they gathered the elders, and the people believed and worshiped.

## Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. What three signs did God give Moses, and why? (4:2-9)

2. What was Moses' objection in verse 10, and how did God answer it? (4:10-12)

3. Why did the LORD's anger burn against Moses, and what did He provide anyway? (4:13-16)

4. What did God call Israel, and what did He warn would happen to Pharaoh's son? (4:22-23)

5. What happened at the lodging place, and what did Zipporah do? (4:24-26)

6. How did the people respond when Aaron spoke and did the signs? (4:31)

7. How does Matthew 2:15 connect God's son Israel with Jesus?

8. Exodus says both that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and that Pharaoh hardened his own. How do you understand that? (4:21; 8:15)

9. God asked Moses, "What is this in your hand?" What has God already put in your hands that He could use?

10. Moses had to obey God in his own home before he could lead others. Is there an area at home where you need to obey God first?

# Chapter 5: Bricks Without Straw

## Scripture

**5:1-9** And afterward Moses and Aaron went, and they said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Let My people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to Me in the wilderness.'" And Pharaoh said, "Who ***is*** the LORD, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and also Israel I will not let go." And they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall on us with the pestilence or with the sword." And the king of Egypt said to them, "Why, Moses and Aaron, are you making the people refrain from its works? Go to your burdens." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land ***are*** now many, and you make them cease from their burdens." And Pharaoh commanded on that day the taskmasters over the people and its foremen, saying, "You shall no longer give straw to the people to make the bricks as yesterday ***and*** the day before; they, let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the quota of the bricks which they were making yesterday ***and*** the day before, you shall put on them; you shall not reduce ***anything*** from it; for they ***are*** idle; therefore they ***are*** crying out, saying, 'Let us go, let us sacrifice to our God.' Let the service be heavy on the men, so that they may work at it, and let them not pay attention to words of falsehood."

**5:10-23** And the taskmasters of the people and its foremen went out, and they said to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I am not giving you straw. You, go, get straw for yourselves from wherever you can find ***it***; for nothing ***is*** reduced from your service.'" And the people scattered in all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. And the taskmasters ***were*** pressing, saying, "Complete your works, the matter of a day in its day, just as when ***there*** was the straw." And the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom the taskmasters of Pharaoh had appointed over them, were struck, saying, "Why have you not completed your allotment in making bricks as yesterday ***and*** the day before, both yesterday and today?" And the foremen of the sons of Israel came, and they cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you do thus to your servants? Straw is not given to your servants, and ***they are*** saying to us, 'Make bricks!' And look, your servants ***are*** being struck, and the sin ***is*** your people's." And he said, "Idle, you ***are*** idle! Therefore you ***are*** saying, 'Let us go, let us sacrifice to the LORD.' And now, go, serve; and straw shall not be given to you, and the quota of bricks you shall give." And the foremen of the sons of Israel saw themselves in trouble, ***when it was*** said, "You shall not reduce ***anything*** from your bricks, the matter of a day in its day." And they met Moses and Aaron, standing to meet them, as they came out from Pharaoh. And they said to them, "May the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made our odor stink in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us." And Moses returned to the LORD, and he said, "Lord, why have You done evil to this people? Why ***is*** this ***that*** You have sent me? And since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; and You have not delivered Your people at all."

## Chapter 5 Preview

Moses and Aaron finally stand before Pharaoh and deliver God's message: "Let My people go." Pharaoh laughs it off. He does not know the LORD, and he will not let Israel go. Worse, he decides

the slaves have too much free time. He stops giving them straw for making bricks but keeps the same daily quota. The people scatter across Egypt looking for stubble, and the Hebrew foremen are beaten when the quotas are not met.

The foremen blame Moses and Aaron, and Moses takes his complaint to God. Why has God let things get worse? This chapter is honest about something every believer meets sooner or later: obeying God does not always make life easier right away. Sometimes things get worse before God's deliverance comes.

## Chapter 5 Study

**5:1** *And afterward Moses and Aaron went, and they said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Let My people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to Me in the wilderness.'"*

"Afterward Moses and Aaron went, and they said to Pharaoh." Picture the scene. Two old men, one eighty and one eighty-three (7:7), a shepherd from the desert and a slave from the brick pits, walk into the court of the most powerful king on earth.

"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel." The message was simple: "Let My people go." This is the first time we hear that famous command. The goal is clear: "so that they may celebrate a festival to Me in the wilderness." A festival was a holy feast held in worship. God was not just freeing workers. He was calling His people to come and worship Him.

**5:2** *And Pharaoh said, "Who **is** the LORD, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and also Israel I will not let go."*

Pharaoh's answer sums up his whole heart: "Who is the LORD, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD."

In Egypt, Pharaoh himself was treated as a god. Why should he listen to the god of his slaves? He meant his words as an insult. But God would answer his question. Over and over in the chapters to come, God says He is acting so that Egypt "shall know that I am the LORD" (7:5). By the end, Pharaoh will know very well who the LORD is.

Many people today say the same thing in their own way: Who is God, that I should obey Him? God's patience is long, but one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

**5:3** *And they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall on us with the pestilence or with the sword."*

Moses and Aaron asked again, more humbly: "Please let us go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to the LORD our God." They warned that they had to obey God, "lest He fall on us with the pestilence or with the sword."

They spoke of God's judgment falling on Israel, not on Egypt. They were saying, Our God has commanded this, and we are in danger if we don't obey. They did not yet threaten Pharaoh. That would come later.

**5:4-5** *And the king of Egypt said to them, "Why, Moses and Aaron, are you making the people refrain from its works? Go to your burdens." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land **are** now many, and you make them cease from their burdens."*

Pharaoh brushed them off: "Why, Moses and Aaron, are you making the people refrain from its works? Go to your burdens." To him, worship was only a way to get out of work. He looked at the people of Israel and saw only labor and numbers. "The people of the land are now many, and you make them cease from their burdens."

The world often sees time given to God as time wasted. But the Lord's people are not machines. We were made for God, and worship is never a waste.

**5:6-9** *And Pharaoh commanded on that day the taskmasters over the people and its foremen, saying, "You shall no longer give straw to the people to make the bricks as yesterday **and** the day before; they, let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the quota of the bricks which they were making yesterday **and** the day before, you shall put on them; you shall not reduce **anything** from it; for they **are** idle; therefore they **are** crying out, saying, 'Let us go, let us sacrifice to our God.' Let the service be heavy on the men, so that they may work at it, and let them not pay attention to words of falsehood."*

"On that day" Pharaoh gave new orders to "the taskmasters" (the Egyptian slave drivers) and "its foremen" (Hebrew men put in charge of their own people). Straw was mixed into the clay to make bricks hold together. Until now, the government gave the straw. From now on, the slaves had to gather it themselves, with the same number of bricks each day.

Pharaoh's reason: "they are idle; therefore they are crying out." He even mocked their words: "Let us go, let us sacrifice to our God." His plan was to keep them so busy and tired that they would "not pay attention to words of falsehood." To Pharaoh, God's words were lies. If the people were exhausted enough, they would not have the strength to hope.

This is still one of the enemy's tools. Keep people too busy to think about God. A crowded life can drown out God's Word as easily as a hard life.

**5:10-14** *And the taskmasters of the people and its foremen went out, and they said to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I am not giving you straw. You, go, get straw for yourselves from wherever you can find **it**; for nothing **is** reduced from your service.'" And the people scattered in all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. And the taskmasters **were** pressing, saying, "Complete your works, the matter of a day in its day, just as when **there** was the straw." And the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom the taskmasters of Pharaoh had appointed over them, were struck, saying, "Why have you not completed your allotment in making bricks as yesterday **and** the day before, both yesterday and today?"*

The taskmasters and foremen gave the order: "Thus says Pharaoh." And Pharaoh's word was, "I am not giving you straw." Notice the echo. Moses said, "Thus says the LORD." Now the slave drivers say, "Thus says Pharaoh." Two kings are giving orders, and Israel has to decide whom to trust.

"The people scattered in all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw." Stubble is the short stalks left in a field after the harvest. Gathering it took hours. The taskmasters kept pressing: "Complete your works, the matter of a day in its day."

The Hebrew foremen took the blame. They "were struck," beaten for their people's failure to meet the quota. They were caught in the middle, between Pharaoh's demands and their people's limits.

**5:15-16** *And the foremen of the sons of Israel came, and they cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why do you do thus to your servants? Straw is not given to your servants, and **they are** saying to us, 'Make bricks!' And look, your servants **are** being struck, and the sin **is** your people's."*

The foremen went straight to Pharaoh. "Why do you do thus to your servants?" They laid out the facts: no straw is given, the same bricks are required, and your servants are being beaten. "And the sin is your people's."

Notice who they went to. They went to Pharaoh, not to God. They still looked to Egypt's king to fix their problem. It is easy for us to do the same, to run to the world's systems for help before we cry out to the Lord.

**5:17-18** *And he said, "Idle, you **are** idle! Therefore you **are** saying, 'Let us go, let us sacrifice to the LORD.' And now, go, serve; and straw shall not be given to you, and the quota of bricks you shall give."*

Pharaoh would not move. "Idle, you are idle!" He repeated his accusation in verse 8. "Therefore you are saying," he said, and he mocked their request again. He had no answer for the injustice. He only had more work.

"And now, go, serve; and straw shall not be given to you, and the quota of bricks you shall give." Pharaoh is a picture of what sin and Satan do to people. Sin promises nothing and demands everything. It makes the burden heavier and offers no help. Jesus said, "everyone who does sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). Only the Son can make us truly free (John 8:36).

**5:19-21** *And the foremen of the sons of Israel saw themselves in trouble,* ***when it was*** *said, "You shall not reduce* ***anything*** *from your bricks, the matter of a day in its day." And they met Moses and Aaron, standing to meet them, as they came out from Pharaoh. And they said to them, "May the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made our odor stink in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."*

The foremen "saw themselves in trouble." As they came out, they found Moses and Aaron waiting for them, and they let them have it: "May the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made our odor stink in the eyes of Pharaoh." In other words, you have made us hateful to Pharaoh. You have put "a sword in their hand to kill us."

In chapter 4 the people believed and worshiped. A few days later they were cursing Moses. Faith that depends on things getting easier right away will not last long. God's people would show this weakness again and again in the wilderness.

**5:22-23** *And Moses returned to the LORD, and he said, "Lord, why have You done evil to this people? Why* ***is*** *this* ***that*** *You have sent me? And since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; and You have not delivered Your people at all."*

"And Moses returned to the LORD." This is the best thing Moses does in the chapter. He did not argue with the foremen or run back to Midian. He took his complaint to God.

And his prayer was honest: "Lord, why have You done evil to this people? Why is this that You have sent me?" The word evil here means harm or trouble, not moral wickedness. Moses was saying, Lord, You have made things worse. "And You have not delivered Your people at all."

God allows us to bring our honest questions to Him. Many of the psalms do this (Psalm 13:1; 22:1). It is better to bring our hurt to God than to walk away from Him. But Moses' complaint shows he had forgotten part of what God told him: Pharaoh would refuse, and God would have to act with a strong hand (3:19-20). Things getting worse was not a sign that God had failed. It was the beginning of what God said would happen.

Have you ever obeyed God and found things got harder? That does not mean you heard Him wrong. Sometimes the darkest hour is just before God moves.

## Chapter 5 Summary

Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that the LORD, the God of Israel, said to let His people go to hold a festival in the wilderness. Pharaoh answered that he did not know the LORD and would not let Israel go. Calling the people idle, he ordered that they no longer be given straw for bricks but still make the same number. The people scattered to gather stubble, and the Hebrew foremen were beaten when the quotas were not met. The foremen complained to Pharaoh, who called them lazy and refused to change anything. They then blamed Moses and Aaron for making them hateful to Pharaoh. Moses took his complaint to the LORD, asking why He had brought trouble on His people and had not delivered them.

## Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What did Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh, and how did he answer? (5:1-2)

2. Why did Pharaoh stop giving the people straw? (5:6-9)

3. What happened to the Hebrew foremen when the quota was not met? (5:14)

4. Whom did the foremen blame for their trouble, and what did they say? (5:20-21)

5. What did Moses do after the foremen confronted him? (5:22-23)

6. What had God already told Moses that should have prepared him for Pharaoh's refusal? (3:19-20)

7. How is Pharaoh like sin, which demands more and gives nothing? (John 8:34-36)

8. Pharaoh thought worship was a waste of good working time. In what ways does our culture think the same?

9. Have you ever obeyed God and seen things get harder before they got better? What did you learn?

10. Moses took his honest complaint to God. What would it look like for you to bring your questions to God instead of walking away from Him?

# Chapter 6: I Am the LORD

## Scripture

**6:1-13** And the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh; for by a strong hand he will let them go, and by a strong hand he will drive them out from his land." And God spoke to Moses, and He said to him, "I ***am*** the LORD. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty; and ***by*** My name, the LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. And also I established My covenant with them, to give to them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, in which they sojourned. And also I, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom Egypt ***is*** making serve, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the sons of Israel, 'I ***am*** the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will deliver you from their service, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. And I will take you for Myself as a people, and I will be God to you; and you shall know that I ***am*** the LORD your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of Egypt. And I will bring you into the land which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you ***as*** a possession. I ***am*** the LORD.'" And Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel; and they did not listen to Moses because of shortness of spirit and because of hard service. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Go, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he may let the sons of Israel go from his land." And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "Look, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; and how will Pharaoh listen to me, and I ***am*** uncircumcised of lips?" And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them for the sons of Israel and for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt.

**6:14-30** These ***are*** the heads of the house of their fathers: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these ***are*** the clans of Reuben. And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul, the son of the Canaanite woman; these ***are*** the clans of Simeon. And these ***are*** the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi ***were*** one hundred and thirty-seven years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their clans. And the sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath ***were*** one hundred and thirty-three years. And the sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These ***are*** the clans of the Levite according to their generations. And Amram took Jochebed, his father's sister, for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Aaron and Moses; and the years of the life of Amram ***were*** one hundred and thirty-seven years. And the sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri. And the sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri. And Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And the sons of Korah: Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these ***are*** the clans of the Korahite. And Eleazar, the son of Aaron, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Phinehas. These ***are*** the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their clans. That ***is*** Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." They ***are*** the ones who were speaking to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt; that ***is*** Moses and Aaron. And it was on the day ***when*** the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, and the LORD

spoke to Moses, saying, "I ***am*** the LORD; speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I ***am*** speaking to you." And Moses said before the LORD, "Look, I ***am*** uncircumcised of lips, and how will Pharaoh listen to me?"

## Chapter 6 Preview

Moses has just asked God why things got worse. God answers him, not with an explanation, but with Himself. "I am the LORD." He reminds Moses of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He gives a series of promises: I will bring you out, I will deliver you, I will redeem you, I will take you as My people, I will be your God, I will bring you into the land, and I will give it to you. Moses passes the message on, but the people are too crushed to listen. When God sends Moses back to Pharaoh, Moses objects again.

In the middle of the chapter, Moses stops the story to give a family record of Reuben, Simeon and especially Levi. It shows exactly who Moses and Aaron were. Then the story picks up where it left off, with Moses saying he is "uncircumcised of lips." This chapter teaches us that God's promises do not depend on how we feel, or on how strong our faith is that day. They depend on who He is.

## Chapter 6 Study

**6:1** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh; for by a strong hand he will let them go, and by a strong hand he will drive them out from his land."*

"Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh." God did not scold Moses for his complaint in 5:22-23. He told him to watch. The word "now" tells Moses that the waiting is nearly over.

"For by a strong hand he will let them go, and by a strong hand he will drive them out from his land." Pharaoh had said he would not let Israel go (5:2). God says Pharaoh will not only let them go, he will drive them out. That is just what happens (12:31-33).

**6:2-3** *And God spoke to Moses, and He said to him, "I **am** the LORD. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty; and **by** My name, the LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.*

"And God spoke to Moses, and He said to him, I am the LORD." Everything in this section rests on these words, which appear four times in verses 2 to 8.

God says He appeared to the patriarchs "as God Almighty," in Hebrew El Shaddai (Genesis 17:1). "And by My name, the LORD, I did not make Myself known to them." But Abraham did use the name the LORD (Genesis 15:7; 22:14). So what does God mean? Most conservative teachers understand it this way: the patriarchs knew the name, but they did not know by experience everything it meant. To know God as the LORD is to know Him as the God who keeps His covenant and saves His people with a mighty hand. Abraham received the promises. Israel was about to see them kept.

**6:4-5** *And also I established My covenant with them, to give to them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, in which they sojourned. And also I, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom Egypt* ***is*** *making serve, and I have remembered My covenant.*

God said, "I established My covenant with them, to give to them the land of Canaan." They had lived in it only as sojourners, foreigners without any land of their own except a burial cave (Genesis 23). But God promised the whole land to their descendants.

"I, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel," God said, "and I have remembered My covenant." This repeats 2:24. God's covenant was the reason for everything He was about to do. Israel did not deserve to be saved. God saved them because He had made a promise, and He keeps His promises.

**6:6-8** *Therefore say to the sons of Israel, 'I* ***am*** *the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will deliver you from their service, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. And I will take you for Myself as a people, and I will be God to you; and you shall know that I* ***am*** *the LORD your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of Egypt. And I will bring you into the land which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you* ***as*** *a possession. I* ***am*** *the LORD.'"*

This passage is one of the great passages of salvation in the Old Testament. Read the promises one at a time:

- "I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt."
- "I will deliver you from their service."
- "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."
- "I will take you for Myself as a people."
- "I will be God to you."
- "I will bring you into the land."
- "I will give it to you as a possession."

To redeem means to buy back or set free by paying a price or by using power. In Israel, a relative could redeem a family member who had been sold into slavery (Leviticus 25:47-49). God says He will be Israel's Redeemer, the One who sets them free. Every one of these promises begins with God. Israel did nothing but receive.

These promises also show the shape of our salvation in Christ. He brings us out from under sin, redeems us by His blood (1 Peter 1:18-19), makes us His people (Titus 2:14) and brings us into an inheritance kept in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4). God is the One who does the saving.

The promise begins and ends with the same words: "I am the LORD." God's name is the guarantee. Jewish families later built the Passover meal around four cups of wine linked to the promises of verses 6 and 7, but that custom came long after Moses.

**6:9** *And Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel; and they did not listen to Moses because of shortness of spirit and because of hard service.*

"Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel; and they did not listen to Moses because of shortness of spirit and because of hard service." Shortness of spirit means they were discouraged, worn out, with no breath left for hope. Pharaoh's plan in chapter 5 had worked. The people were too beaten down to listen.

This verse shows great tenderness in God. He did not cancel His promises because the people could not believe them that day. God's promises were not based on their faith being strong. They were based on God being faithful. If you are too tired to hope, God has not given up on you.

**6:10-13** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Go, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he may let the sons of Israel go from his land." And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, "Look, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; and how will Pharaoh listen to me, and I **am** uncircumcised of lips?" And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them for the sons of Israel and for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt.*

God sent Moses to Pharaoh again: "Go, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he may let the sons of Israel go."

Moses' answer makes sense from a human point of view: "Look, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; and how will Pharaoh listen to me, and I am uncircumcised of lips?" Uncircumcised here means unfit or unready, like a heart or an ear that does not respond (Jeremiah 6:10). Moses felt his lips were not fit to speak for God.

God did not argue this time. He simply "commanded them," both Moses and Aaron, to bring Israel out of Egypt. Sometimes God answers our objections by repeating His command. The command itself carries His promise to help us do it.

**6:14-19** *These **are** the heads of the house of their fathers: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these **are** the clans of Reuben. And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul, the son of the Canaanite woman; these **are** the clans of Simeon. And these **are** the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi **were** one hundred and thirty-seven years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their clans. And the sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath **were** one hundred and thirty-three years. And the sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These **are** the clans of the Levite according to their generations.*

Here Moses pauses the story to give a family record. It begins with Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon, then Levi. It stops at Levi, because the point is to show where Moses and Aaron came from. The list is not a complete record of every tribe.

"Shaul, the son of the Canaanite woman" (6:15) is a small reminder that some of Jacob's sons married Canaanite women (Genesis 38:2). Levi had three sons, Gershon, Kohath and Merari. These became the three main clans of Levites, who would later carry and care for the tabernacle

(Numbers 3-4). The Levites were the tribe of Levi, set apart by God to serve in His worship. Levi lived 137 years, and Kohath 133 years.

**6:20** *And Amram took Jochebed, his father's sister, for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Aaron and Moses; and the years of the life of Amram **were** one hundred and thirty-seven years.*

"Amram took Jochebed, his father's sister, for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Aaron and Moses." Here we learn the names of the parents we met in chapter 2. Amram married his aunt. The Law later forbade that kind of marriage (Leviticus 18:12), but the Law had not been given yet.

Moses could have hidden this detail about his own family, but he did not. Scripture tells the truth about its heroes. Moses and Aaron were not great because of their family. They were great because God called them.

Some teachers think there are gaps in this family list, since Kohath to Moses seems too short for four hundred thirty years (12:40). Hebrew family lists sometimes skip generations, and "son" can mean descendant.

**6:21-25** *And the sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri. And the sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri. And Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And the sons of Korah: Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these **are** the clans of the Korahite. And Eleazar, the son of Aaron, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel for himself as a wife, and she bore to him Phinehas. These **are** the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their clans.*

The list adds a few more names that will matter later. "Korah," the son of Izhar, will lead a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16). His sons, though, survived (Numbers 26:11), and their descendants wrote some of the psalms.

Aaron married Elisheba, "the sister of Nahshon," a leader of the tribe of Judah and an ancestor of King David (Ruth 4:20). Their sons were "Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar." Nadab and Abihu will die for offering strange fire before the LORD (Leviticus 10:1-2). Eleazar will become high priest after Aaron, and his son "Phinehas" will be known for his zeal for God (Numbers 25:7-13). This short list is full of people whose stories are still ahead.

**6:26-27** *That **is** Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." They **are** the ones who were speaking to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt; that **is** Moses and Aaron.*

Moses sums up the reason for the list: "That is Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." Armies here means organized groups, tribe by tribe. Israel was not going to leave Egypt as a mob of runaway slaves. They would march out in order.

"That is Moses and Aaron." The list ends by naming them twice, once with Aaron first and once with Moses first. These are the men God chose, from a real family, in real history.

**6:28-30** *And it was on the day **when** the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I **am** the LORD; speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I **am** speaking to you." And Moses said before the LORD, "Look, I **am** uncircumcised of lips, and how will Pharaoh listen to me?"*

The story picks up again where verse 12 left off. "On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt," God repeated His words: "I am the LORD; speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I am speaking to you."

Moses repeated his objection: "Look, I am uncircumcised of lips, and how will Pharaoh listen to me?" The chapter ends without God's answer, which comes in the first verses of chapter 7.

The chapter began and ended with Moses doubting, and in between stood God, saying, "I am the LORD." That is how many of us live. Our feelings rise and fall. God does not change. His name is still the anchor for our faith.

## Chapter 6 Summary

God answered Moses' complaint by promising that Pharaoh would let Israel go under His strong hand. He declared, "I am the LORD," reminded Moses of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give them the land of Canaan, and said He had heard Israel's groaning. He gave seven promises: to bring them out, deliver them, redeem them, take them as His people, be their God, bring them into the land and give it to them. The people were too discouraged to listen. When God sent Moses again to Pharaoh, Moses said he was uncircumcised of lips. Moses then gave the family records of Reuben, Simeon and Levi, showing that he and Aaron were sons of Amram and Jochebed and naming Aaron's sons. The chapter ends with Moses again saying that Pharaoh would not listen to him.

## Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What did God say Pharaoh would do "by a strong hand"? (6:1)

2. What did God mean when He said He did not make Himself known to the patriarchs by His name the LORD? (6:3)

3. List the "I will" promises God gave in verses 6 to 8. Which one stands out to you?

4. What does it mean to redeem someone, and how does God redeem Israel? (6:6)

5. Why did the people not listen to Moses? (6:9)

6. Why does Moses include the family list of Levi here? (6:14-27)

7. Which names in the family list show up later in Israel's history, and what happens to them? (6:21-25)

8. How do the promises of verses 6 to 8 picture what Christ does for us? (1 Peter 1:18-19; Titus 2:14)

9. Israel was too crushed to believe, but God kept His promises anyway. How does that encourage you when your faith feels weak?

10. Moses kept pointing to his weakness, and God kept pointing to His name. What weakness are you holding up to God right now?

# Chapter 7: The Nile Turned to Blood

## Scripture

**7:1-13** And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you ***in the place of*** God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You, you shall speak all that I command you, and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, and he shall let the sons of Israel go from his land. And I, I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will put My hand on Egypt, and I will bring out My armies, My people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. And Egypt will know that I ***am*** the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and I will bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." And Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them; so they did. And Moses ***was*** a son of eighty years, and Aaron ***was*** a son of eighty-three years, when they spoke to Pharaoh. And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Give a wonder for yourselves,' and you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw ***it*** before Pharaoh; let it become a serpent.'" And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. And Pharaoh also called for the wise men and for the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did so by their secret arts. And they threw down, each man his staff, and they became serpents; and the staff of Aaron swallowed up their staffs. And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.

**7:14-25** And the LORD said to Moses, "The heart of Pharaoh ***is*** heavy; he has refused to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning; look, he ***is*** going out to the waters, and you shall stand to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and the staff that was changed into a snake you shall take in your hand. And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; and look, you have not listened until now. Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I ***am*** the LORD: look, I am striking with the staff that ***is*** in My hand on the waters that ***are*** in the Nile, and they shall be changed into blood. And the fish that ***is*** in the Nile shall die, and the Nile shall stink, and Egypt shall be weary to drink water from the Nile."'" And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, and over their pools, and over every collection of their waters, so that they may become blood; and ***there*** shall be blood in all the land of Egypt, both in the wood and in the stone.'" And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD had commanded; and he raised the staff, and he struck the waters that ***were*** in the Nile in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants; and all the waters that ***were*** in the Nile were changed into blood. And the fish that ***was*** in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, and Egypt was not able to drink water from the Nile; and the blood was in all the land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so by their secret arts; and the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken. And Pharaoh turned, and he went into his house, and he did not set his heart even to this. And all Egypt dug around the Nile ***for*** water to drink, for they were not able to drink of the waters of the Nile. And seven days were completed after the LORD struck the Nile.

## Chapter 7 Preview

God answers Moses' fear that Pharaoh will not listen. He tells Moses that Pharaoh will not listen, and that this is part of God's plan. God will multiply His signs and wonders, and Egypt will come to know that He is the LORD. Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh, and Aaron's staff becomes a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, but Aaron's staff swallows theirs.

Then the judgments begin. God sends Moses to meet Pharaoh at the Nile in the morning. Aaron strikes the water, and the river turns to blood. The fish die, the river stinks, and the Egyptians cannot drink. The magicians copy this too, and Pharaoh goes home without a second thought. For seven days Egypt digs for water. This chapter starts the ten plagues, God's mighty acts of judgment on Egypt and its gods.

## Chapter 7 Study

**7:1-2** *And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you **in the place of** God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You, you shall speak all that I command you, and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, and he shall let the sons of Israel go from his land.*

"See, I have made you in the place of God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." Moses had said he could not speak. God answered by giving him a role. Moses would speak to Pharaoh with God's authority, and Aaron would be his spokesman.

This verse gives us a clear picture of what a prophet is. A prophet is someone who speaks for God, passing on the words God gives him. Moses would hear from God, and Aaron would speak for Moses. In the same way, the true prophets of Israel would say, "Thus says the LORD."

God's plan had not changed: "he shall let the sons of Israel go from his land."

**7:3-5** *And I, I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will put My hand on Egypt, and I will bring out My armies, My people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. And Egypt will know that I **am** the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and I will bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."*

"And I, I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt." God told Moses again that Pharaoh would resist. His hardness would not stop God's plan. It would become the stage on which God showed His power.

"I will bring out My armies, My people, the sons of Israel." God calls slaves His armies. That is how God sees His people, not by what they look like now, but by what He has made them to be.

Why the plagues? Verse 5 tells us: "Egypt will know that I am the LORD." Pharaoh had said, "I do not know the LORD" (5:2). God's answer to Pharaoh's question runs through the next five chapters. The plagues were judgments on a cruel nation, and they were also lessons. Egypt, Israel and the whole world would learn that the LORD is the one true God. Even so, each plague was also a warning, a chance to turn before the next one came.

**7:6-7** *And Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them; so they did. And Moses **was** a son of eighty years, and Aaron **was** a son of eighty-three years, when they spoke to Pharaoh.*

"Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them." From here on, Moses does not argue. He obeys.

"Moses was a son of eighty years, and Aaron was a son of eighty-three years." Moses gives us their ages because they matter. At eighty, most people think their work is done. Moses' greatest work was just beginning. Stephen breaks his life into three forty-year parts: forty in Egypt, forty in Midian, and forty leading Israel (Acts 7:23, 30, 36). God is never done with a willing servant.

**7:8-10** *And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Give a wonder for yourselves,' and you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw **it** before Pharaoh; let it become a serpent.'" And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.*

God told them what to do when Pharaoh would ask for a wonder, a sign to prove they spoke for a god. Aaron was to throw down his staff, and it would become a serpent. The word for serpent here is different from the word for snake in 4:3. It can mean a large reptile, even a crocodile or sea creature, a fitting sign before a king whose land was the Nile.

They did "just as the LORD had commanded." Aaron threw down his staff "before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent." Pharaoh asked for proof, and God gave it.

**7:11-12** *And Pharaoh also called for the wise men and for the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did so by their secret arts. And they threw down, each man his staff, and they became serpents; and the staff of Aaron swallowed up their staffs.*

Pharaoh "called for the wise men and for the sorcerers," and "they also, the magicians of Egypt, did so by their secret arts." Paul names two men who opposed Moses, Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8), and Jewish tradition says they were among these magicians.

How did they do it? Scripture does not say. It may have been trickery, such as snake charming, or it may have been real demonic power. The Bible warns that Satan can do false signs to deceive (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Either way, the result was clear: "the staff of Aaron swallowed up their staffs." Satan can copy, but he cannot defeat God. The power of Egypt was swallowed up by the power of the LORD.

**7:13** *And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.*

"And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken." Here the text does not say that God hardened him. It simply says his heart was strong, or hard. He had seen a clear sign and chose not to listen.

Pharaoh is a warning to us. Seeing a miracle does not change a heart that does not want to be changed. Jesus said that someone who will not listen to Moses and the Prophets will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead (Luke 16:31).

**7:14-16** *And the LORD said to Moses, "The heart of Pharaoh **is** heavy; he has refused to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning; look, he **is** going out to the waters, and you shall stand to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and the staff that was changed into a snake you shall take in your hand. And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; and look, you have not listened until now.*

"The heart of Pharaoh is heavy; he has refused to let the people go." Heavy is another word used for Pharaoh's heart. The same Hebrew word can mean glory or honor. Pharaoh's heart was heavy with pride.

God sent Moses to meet Pharaoh "in the morning" as "he is going out to the waters." Many think Pharaoh went to the Nile each morning, perhaps for worship, since the Egyptians honored the river as a god. Moses was to stand on the bank with the staff that had turned into a snake and say again, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh's answer had not changed. "Look, you have not listened until now." The first plague was coming.

**7:17-18** *Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I **am** the LORD: look, I am striking with the staff that **is** in My hand on the waters that **are** in the Nile, and they shall be changed into blood. And the fish that **is** in the Nile shall die, and the Nile shall stink, and Egypt shall be weary to drink water from the Nile."'"*

"By this you shall know that I am the LORD." God told Pharaoh exactly what would happen: the water of the Nile "shall be changed into blood," the fish would die, the river would stink, and the Egyptians would be weary of trying to drink from it.

Why the Nile first? The Nile was Egypt's life. Without it, the land was desert. The Egyptians worshiped the river and its flood, linked to a god they called Hapi. And Pharaoh had used the Nile to drown Hebrew baby boys (1:22). Now the river would run with blood. God's judgment matched the sin. Later God says plainly that "on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments" (12:12).

**7:19-21** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, and over their pools, and over every collection of their waters, so that they may become blood; and **there** shall be blood in all the land of Egypt, both in the wood and in the stone.'" And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD had commanded; and he raised the staff, and he struck the waters that **were** in the Nile in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants; and all the waters that **were** in the Nile were changed into blood. And the fish that **was** in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, and Egypt was not able to drink water from the Nile; and the blood was in all the land of Egypt.*

God told Aaron to stretch his staff over all of Egypt's water: "over their rivers, over their canals, and over their pools." The blood would even be "both in the wood and in the stone," in the wooden and stone jars where people stored water in their homes.

Moses and Aaron obeyed. In front of Pharaoh and his servants, Aaron struck the Nile, "and all the waters that were in the Nile were changed into blood." The fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink.

Some suggest God used natural means, such as red soil or algae in a flood season. God can use natural means. But the timing, the command and the scope show this was a miracle. It came at Moses' word, at the moment he struck the water. Revelation 16:3-4 describes a future judgment in which the seas and rivers become blood. The God who judged Egypt will judge the world.

**7:22** *And the magicians of Egypt did so by their secret arts; and the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.*

"The magicians of Egypt did so by their secret arts." They managed to turn some water to blood. But notice what they could not do. They could not turn the blood back into water. They could only make things worse. The magicians could imitate God's judgment, but they could not undo it.

That was enough for Pharaoh. "The heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them." He wanted a reason not to believe, and his magicians gave him one.

**7:23-25** *And Pharaoh turned, and he went into his house, and he did not set his heart even to this. And all Egypt dug around the Nile **for** water to drink, for they were not able to drink of the waters of the Nile. And seven days were completed after the LORD struck the Nile.*

"Pharaoh turned, and he went into his house, and he did not set his heart even to this." His people were thirsty. Their fish were dead. Their god had been turned to blood. Pharaoh walked home and did not give it a second thought.

"All Egypt dug around the Nile for water to drink." The people of Egypt suffered because of their king's pride. That is often how it works. Leaders' sins bring trouble on many.

"And seven days were completed after the LORD struck the Nile." Notice who struck the Nile. Aaron raised the staff, but the LORD struck the river. For a full week, Egypt lived with the result. God gave Pharaoh time to think and to turn. He did not.

## Chapter 7 Summary

God told Moses that he would stand in the place of God to Pharaoh, with Aaron as his prophet, and that He would harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply His signs so that Egypt would know He is the LORD. Moses, eighty, and Aaron, eighty-three, obeyed. Aaron's staff became a serpent before Pharaoh, and when the magicians did the same, Aaron's staff swallowed theirs. Pharaoh's heart was hard. Then God sent Moses to meet Pharaoh at the Nile. Aaron struck the water, and the Nile and all the waters of Egypt turned to blood. The fish died, the river stank and the people could not drink. The magicians copied the sign, Pharaoh went home unmoved, and Egypt dug for water for seven days.

## Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What role did God give Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh? (7:1-2)

2. Why did God say He would multiply His signs in Egypt? (7:3-5)

3. How old were Moses and Aaron when they spoke to Pharaoh? (7:7)

4. What happened to Aaron's staff and the staffs of the magicians? (7:10-12)

5. What was the first plague, and what did it affect? (7:19-21)

6. What could the magicians do, and what could they not do? (7:22)

7. How did Pharaoh respond to the first plague? (7:23)

8. Why do you think God's first plague struck the Nile? (1:22; 12:12)

9. Moses' greatest work began at eighty. What does that say to you about your age or stage of life?

10. Pharaoh "did not set his heart even to this." Is there something God has been showing you that you have chosen to ignore?

# Chapter 8: Frogs, Gnats, and Flies

## Scripture

**8:1-15** And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. And if you ***are*** refusing to let ***them*** go, look, I am striking all your territory with frogs. And the Nile shall swarm ***with*** frogs, and they shall go up and come into your house and into the chamber of your bed and on your couch, and into the house of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading troughs. And on you and on your people and on all your servants the frogs shall go up."'" And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals, and over the pools, and bring up the frogs on the land of Egypt.'" And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs went up, and they covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so by their secret arts, and they brought up the frogs on the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "Pray to the LORD, that He may remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD." And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Glorify yourself over me: for when shall I pray for you and for your servants and for your people, to cut off the frogs from you and from your houses? Only in the Nile shall they remain." And he said, "For tomorrow." And he said, "***It shall be*** according to your word, so that you may know that there is none like the LORD our God. And the frogs shall depart from you and from your houses and from your servants and from your people; only in the Nile shall they remain." And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the matter of the frogs which He had set on Pharaoh. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. And they heaped them up, heaps ***and*** heaps, and the land stank. And Pharaoh saw that the relief had come, and he made his heart heavy, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.

**8:16-19** And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff, and strike the dust of the earth, and it shall become gnats in all the land of Egypt.'" And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and he struck the dust of the earth, and the gnats were on mankind and on livestock; all the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so by their secret arts to bring forth the gnats, and they were not able; and the gnats were on mankind and on livestock. And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "It ***is*** the finger of God." And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.

**8:20-32** And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning, and station yourself before Pharaoh; look, he ***is*** going out to the waters; and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you ***are*** not letting My people go, look, I am sending the swarm on you and on your servants and on your people and on your houses; and the houses of Egypt shall be full of the swarm, and also the ground on which they ***are***. And I will set apart on that day the land of Goshen, on which My people ***are*** standing, so that no swarm shall be there, so that you may know that I ***am*** the LORD in the midst of the land. And I will put a ransom between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be."'" And the LORD did so; and a

heavy swarm came into the house of Pharaoh and the house of his servants; and in all the land of Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarm. And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land." And Moses said, "***It is*** not right to do so; for we will sacrifice the abomination of Egypt to the LORD our God. Look, we will sacrifice the abomination of Egypt before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and we will sacrifice to the LORD our God, just as He says to us." And Pharaoh said, "I, I will let you go, and you shall sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall certainly not go far away in ***your*** going. Pray for me." And Moses said, "Look, I ***am*** going out from you, and I will pray to the LORD, and the swarm shall turn aside from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only let Pharaoh not again deal deceitfully by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses, and He removed the swarm from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. And Pharaoh made his heart heavy this time also, and he did not let the people go.

## Chapter 8 Preview

Three more plagues fall on Egypt in this chapter. First come frogs, out of the Nile and into every house, bedroom and oven. Pharaoh begs Moses to pray, and he promises to let the people go. When the frogs die, he breaks his word. Next, Aaron strikes the dust, and it becomes gnats on people and animals. This time the magicians cannot copy the sign, and they confess, "It is the finger of God." Pharaoh still will not listen.

The fourth plague brings swarms, probably of flies, filling the houses of Egypt. But now God makes a difference between Egypt and His people. No swarms come into Goshen, where Israel lives. Pharaoh starts to bargain: sacrifice here in the land, or go but not far. Moses refuses to settle for less than what God commanded. When the swarms leave, Pharaoh hardens his heart again. Each plague shows more of God's power, and each one exposes more of Pharaoh's stubbornness.

## Chapter 8 Study

**8:1-4** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. And if you **are** refusing to let **them** go, look, I am striking all your territory with frogs. And the Nile shall swarm **with** frogs, and they shall go up and come into your house and into the chamber of your bed and on your couch, and into the house of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading troughs. And on you and on your people and on all your servants the frogs shall go up."'"*

God sent Moses back with the same message: "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me." And a new warning: "look, I am striking all your territory with frogs."

The frogs would not stay in the river. They would come "into your house and into the chamber of your bed and on your couch," into the houses of Pharaoh's servants, "into your ovens and into your kneading troughs." No place would be free of them. Even Pharaoh's bedroom would be full.

The Egyptians linked frogs with fertility and life, and one of their goddesses, Heqet, was pictured with a frog's head. What Egypt honored, God turned into a plague. Nothing we worship in place of God can save us. In the end it will only become a burden.

**8:5-7** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals, and over the pools, and bring up the frogs on the land of Egypt.'" And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs went up, and they covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so by their secret arts, and they brought up the frogs on the land of Egypt.*

"Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs went up, and they covered the land of Egypt." The whole land was covered.

Again "the magicians did so by their secret arts." But think about that. Egypt already had too many frogs. The magicians could make more frogs, but they could not get rid of a single one. Their power only made the problem worse. False religion often works that way. It can copy, but it cannot cure.

**8:8** *And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "Pray to the LORD, that He may remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."*

For the first time, Pharaoh blinked. "Pray to the LORD, that He may remove the frogs from me and from my people." The king who said, "I do not know the LORD" (5:2) now asks Moses to pray to the LORD. And he makes a promise: "I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD."

**8:9-11** *And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Glorify yourself over me: for when shall I pray for you and for your servants and for your people, to cut off the frogs from you and from your houses? Only in the Nile shall they remain." And he said, "For tomorrow." And he said, "**It shall be** according to your word, so that you may know that there is none like the LORD our God. And the frogs shall depart from you and from your houses and from your servants and from your people; only in the Nile shall they remain."*

Moses answered with a kind of challenge: "Glorify yourself over me." In other words, You pick the time. Name it, and it will happen. Moses wanted Pharaoh to see that this was no accident.

Pharaoh said, "For tomorrow." Why not today? We don't know. Maybe he hoped the frogs would leave on their own. Many people treat God the same way. They know they need Him, but they put it off until tomorrow.

Moses agreed, "so that you may know that there is none like the LORD our God." The frogs would leave, except those in the Nile.

**8:12-14** *And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the matter of the frogs which He had set on Pharaoh. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. And they heaped them up, heaps **and** heaps, and the land stank.*

"Moses cried out to the LORD." He did not pray a quick prayer. He cried out, and God heard. "The LORD did according to the word of Moses." The frogs died in the houses, courtyards and fields.

The Egyptians "heaped them up, heaps and heaps, and the land stank." The frogs were gone, but the smell was not. Sin is like that. God can remove a judgment, but the results of sin can linger.

**8:15** *And Pharaoh saw that the relief had come, and he made his heart heavy, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.*

"And Pharaoh saw that the relief had come, and he made his heart heavy." Here the text says plainly that Pharaoh hardened himself. As soon as the pressure was off, he went back on his word.

How many people make promises to God when they are in trouble and forget them when the trouble passes? A sickbed or a hard season can bring out promises. God wants a changed heart, not a bargain. "Just as the LORD had spoken" reminds us that God knew this would happen. Pharaoh's choice did not surprise Him.

**8:16-17** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff, and strike the dust of the earth, and it shall become gnats in all the land of Egypt.'" And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and he struck the dust of the earth, and the gnats were on mankind and on livestock; all the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt.*

The third plague came with no warning. God told Aaron to strike "the dust of the earth, and it shall become gnats in all the land of Egypt." The word may mean gnats, lice or mosquitoes. Either way, they were tiny biting insects, on "mankind and on livestock."

"All the dust of the earth became gnats." Egypt's ground itself turned against it. The Egyptians were very careful about being clean, and their priests shaved their bodies to stay pure for worship. Now no one could stay clean. The priests of Egypt could not even serve their gods.

**8:18-19** *And the magicians did so by their secret arts to bring forth the gnats, and they were not able; and the gnats were on mankind and on livestock. And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "It **is** the finger of God." And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken.*

"The magicians did so by their secret arts to bring forth the gnats, and they were not able." This is the end of their contest. They could not make life out of dust. Only God gives life (Genesis 2:7).

And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "It is the finger of God." The finger of God means God's own direct power. The same phrase is used for God writing the Ten Commandments on stone (31:18).

Jesus said He cast out demons "by the finger of God" (Luke 11:20). Even Pharaoh's own men admitted this was beyond them.

"And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not listen to them." Pharaoh would not even listen to his own experts. When a heart is set against God, no amount of evidence is enough.

**8:20-21** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning, and station yourself before Pharaoh; look, he **is** going out to the waters; and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you **are** not letting My people go, look, I am sending the swarm on you and on your servants and on your people and on your houses; and the houses of Egypt shall be full of the swarm, and also the ground on which they **are**.*

God sent Moses again to meet Pharaoh "in the morning" at "the waters." The pattern is similar to the first plague. "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me." If not, "I am sending the swarm on you."

The Hebrew word for swarm means a mixture or swarm of insects. Many think they were flies, perhaps biting dog flies. The homes of Egypt would be full of them, "and also the ground on which they are."

**8:22-23** *And I will set apart on that day the land of Goshen, on which My people **are** standing, so that no swarm shall be there, so that you may know that I **am** the LORD in the midst of the land. And I will put a ransom between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be."'"*

Now God added something new. "I will set apart on that day the land of Goshen, on which My people are standing, so that no swarm shall be there." Goshen was the region in the eastern Nile delta where Jacob's family had settled (Genesis 47:6).

Why did God set Goshen apart? "So that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land." The LORD is not a god of one river or one region. He rules in the middle of Egypt itself. He can protect His people while judging those around them.

"I will put a ransom between My people and your people." The SLB says ransom, a price paid to set someone free. Many other versions here read division or distinction, and the Hebrew word usually means redemption. Either way, God was making a clear difference between His people and Egypt. From this plague on, Israel is spared (9:4, 26; 10:23; 11:7).

God still knows His own. In the coming day of His wrath, He will keep His people from it (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).

**8:24** *And the LORD did so; and a heavy swarm came into the house of Pharaoh and the house of his servants; and in all the land of Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarm.*

"And the LORD did so." He did not need Aaron's staff this time. He simply did it. "A heavy swarm came into the house of Pharaoh and the house of his servants; and in all the land of Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarm."

The palace was not safe. The ground was ruined. And Goshen, just down the road, was quiet. The Egyptians could see with their own eyes that the God of the Hebrews was protecting His people.

**8:25-27** *And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land." And Moses said, "**It is** not right to do so; for we will sacrifice the abomination of Egypt to the LORD our God. Look, we will sacrifice the abomination of Egypt before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and we will sacrifice to the LORD our God, just as He says to us."*

Pharaoh tried to bargain. "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land." Stay in Egypt, he said, and worship here.

Moses said no. "It is not right to do so; for we will sacrifice the abomination of Egypt to the LORD our God." The animals Israel would sacrifice, such as sheep, goats and cattle, were sacred to some Egyptians or detested by them as offerings. Hebrew sacrifices in the middle of Egypt could cause a riot. "Will they not stone us?"

"We will go a journey of three days into the wilderness, and we will sacrifice to the LORD our God, just as He says to us." Moses would not change what God had commanded. Worship has to be on God's terms, not ours. The world often says to believers, Go ahead and worship your God, but do it here, our way, and don't be different. God calls His people to come out and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17).

**8:28** *And Pharaoh said, "I, I will let you go, and you shall sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall certainly not go far away in **your** going. Pray for me."*

Pharaoh gave in a little more: "I, I will let you go, and you shall sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall certainly not go far away." Then, "Pray for me."

Pharaoh's second offer was still a trap. He wanted Israel close enough to pull back. Satan's offer is often the same. Follow God if you want to, but don't go too far. Keep one foot in Egypt.

**8:29-31** *And Moses said, "Look, I **am** going out from you, and I will pray to the LORD, and the swarm shall turn aside from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only let Pharaoh not again deal deceitfully by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses, and He removed the swarm from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained.*

Moses agreed to pray, and he added a warning: "only let Pharaoh not again deal deceitfully by not letting the people go." Moses had learned from the frogs. He spoke to Pharaoh plainly about his broken promise.

Moses prayed, and "the LORD did according to the word of Moses." The swarm left, and "not one remained." God's answers are complete. When He removes a judgment, He removes it fully.

**8:32** *And Pharaoh made his heart heavy this time also, and he did not let the people go.*

"And Pharaoh made his heart heavy this time also, and he did not let the people go." Again Pharaoh hardened himself. He lied again.

Each time Pharaoh hardened his heart, the next choice was easier to make the wrong way. Hebrews 3:13 warns us not to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Sin promises relief, then pulls us back. The time to listen to God is when He speaks. A heart that says no again and again becomes harder each time.

## Chapter 8 Summary

God sent the second plague, frogs, which came up from the Nile into every house, bedroom and oven in Egypt. The magicians copied it but could not remove them. Pharaoh asked Moses to pray and promised to let Israel go; Moses let him choose the time, and the frogs died the next day, but Pharaoh hardened his heart. In the third plague, Aaron struck the dust and it became gnats on people and animals. The magicians failed to copy it and told Pharaoh, "It is the finger of God," but he would not listen. In the fourth plague, swarms filled Egypt and ruined the land, but God kept them out of Goshen, making a difference between His people and Egypt. Pharaoh offered to let Israel sacrifice in the land, then not to go far. Moses insisted on obeying God's command. When the swarms left, Pharaoh hardened his heart again.

## Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. Where did God say the frogs would go? (8:3)

2. What did Pharaoh promise when he asked Moses to pray, and did he keep it? (8:8, 15)

3. Why do you think Pharaoh said "For tomorrow" instead of today? (8:10)

4. What could the magicians not do in the third plague, and what did they confess? (8:18-19)

5. What was different about the fourth plague? (8:22-23)

6. What two offers did Pharaoh make, and why did Moses refuse the first one? (8:25-28)

7. How does Jesus use the phrase "the finger of God" in Luke 11:20?

8. Pharaoh made promises in trouble and broke them when the trouble passed. Why is that so common?

9. Pharaoh wanted Israel to worship, but "not far away." In what ways does the world ask believers to follow God without being different?

10. Hebrews 3:13 warns about hardening our hearts. Is there an area where you keep saying no to God? What would it take to say yes?

# Chapter 9: Livestock, Boils, and Hail

## Scripture

**9:1-12** And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, and you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you ***are*** refusing to let ***them*** go, and you ***are*** still holding on to them, look, the hand of the LORD will be on your livestock which ***is*** in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herd, and on the flock, a very heavy pestilence. And the LORD will set apart between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and not a thing shall die of all that ***belongs*** to the sons of Israel."'" And the LORD set an appointed time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." And the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; and of the livestock of the sons of Israel not one died. And Pharaoh sent, and look, of the livestock of Israel not even one had died. And the heart of Pharaoh was heavy, and he did not let the people go. And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron, "Take for yourselves the fullness of your hollow hands ***of*** soot of a furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heavens in the eyes of Pharaoh. And it shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and it shall become boils breaking out ***in*** blisters on mankind and on livestock in all the land of Egypt." And they took the soot of the furnace, and they stood before Pharaoh, and Moses sprinkled it toward the heavens; and it became boils ***of*** blisters breaking out on mankind and on livestock. And the magicians were not able to stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all Egypt. And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

**9:13-26** And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning, and station yourself before Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For at this time I am sending all My plagues into your heart and on your servants and on your people, so that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. For now I could have sent out My hand, and I could have struck you and your people with the pestilence, and you would have been effaced from the earth. And yet for this I have caused you to stand: in order to show you My power, and in order to recount My name in all the earth. You ***are*** still exalting yourself against My people, so as not to let them go. Look, I am raining about this time tomorrow a very heavy hail, the like of which has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded and until now. And now send, bring your livestock and all that ***is*** yours in the field to refuge; all mankind and livestock that is found in the field and is not gathered into the house, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die."'" The one fearing the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses. And whoever did not set his heart to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field. And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, so that ***there*** may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on mankind and on livestock and on every plant of the field in the land of Egypt." And Moses stretched out his staff toward the heavens, and the LORD gave thunders and hail, and fire went to the earth; and the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. And ***there*** was hail, and fire flashing in the midst of the hail, very heavy, the like of which had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck in all the land of Egypt all that ***was*** in the field, from mankind and to livestock; and every plant of the field the hail struck, and every

tree of the field it shattered. Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel ***were***, there was no hail.

**9:27-35** And Pharaoh sent, and he called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said to them, "I have sinned this time; the LORD ***is*** the righteous ***one***, and I and my people ***are*** the wicked ***ones***. Pray to the LORD, and ***there has been*** enough of ***the*** thunders of God and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall not continue to stay." And Moses said to him, "When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my palms to the LORD; the thunders shall cease, and the hail shall be no more, so that you may know that the earth ***belongs*** to the LORD. And you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear before the LORD God." And the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley ***was in*** the ear, and the flax ***was in*** bud. And the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they ***were*** late. And Moses went out from Pharaoh, out of the city, and he spread out his palms to the LORD; and the thunders and the hail ceased, and rain was not poured out on the earth. And Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, and he continued to sin, and he made his heart heavy, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken by the hand of Moses.

## Chapter 9 Preview

Three more plagues strike Egypt. The fifth is a deadly disease on the livestock of Egypt, while Israel's animals are untouched. The sixth comes with no warning: Moses throws soot from a furnace into the air, and it becomes painful boils on people and animals. The magicians cannot even stand before Moses. For the first time, the text says plainly that the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart.

The seventh plague is the longest and most serious warning yet. God tells Pharaoh why He has let him stand: to show His power and make His name known in all the earth. God warns the Egyptians to bring their servants and animals inside before the hail, and some of Pharaoh's own servants listen. A terrible storm of hail and fire strikes the land, but not Goshen. Pharaoh says, "I have sinned this time," but as soon as the storm stops, he and his servants harden their hearts again.

## Chapter 9 Study

**9:1-4** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, and you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you **are** refusing to let **them** go, and you **are** still holding on to them, look, the hand of the LORD will be on your livestock which **is** in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herd, and on the flock, a very heavy pestilence. And the LORD will set apart between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and not a thing shall die of all that **belongs** to the sons of Israel."'"*

God sent Moses with the same command: "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me." If Pharaoh kept "still holding on to them," the hand of the LORD would strike Egypt's livestock "in the field" with "a very heavy pestilence," a deadly disease.

The list covers every kind of animal: horses, donkeys, camels, herds and flocks. These animals were Egypt's wealth, its transport, its farming and its food. The Egyptians also honored some animals as sacred, such as the bull Apis.

Once more God would "set apart between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt." Not one animal belonging to Israel would die. God was teaching Egypt, plague by plague, that He protects His own.

**9:5-6** *And the LORD set an appointed time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." And the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; and of the livestock of the sons of Israel not one died.*

"The LORD set an appointed time, saying, Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing." God named the day ahead of time so no one could say it was chance.

"The LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died." In verse 3 the plague was on livestock "in the field," so "all" here likely means all the livestock in the open fields, or all kinds of livestock. Some Egyptian animals were still alive later (9:19; 12:29). The Bible often uses "all" in this broad way. "And of the livestock of the sons of Israel not one died."

**9:7** *And Pharaoh sent, and look, of the livestock of Israel not even one had died. And the heart of Pharaoh was heavy, and he did not let the people go.*

Pharaoh did something new. He "sent" men to check on Israel's animals. "And look, of the livestock of Israel not even one had died." He saw the proof with his own eyes. God had done exactly what He said, on the very day He said it, with a clear line between Egypt and Israel.

"And the heart of Pharaoh was heavy, and he did not let the people go." Evidence does not change a heart that has made up its mind. Pharaoh had his answer, and he refused it.

**9:8-10** *And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron, "Take for yourselves the fullness of your hollow hands **of** soot of a furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heavens in the eyes of Pharaoh. And it shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and it shall become boils breaking out **in** blisters on mankind and on livestock in all the land of Egypt." And they took the soot of the furnace, and they stood before Pharaoh, and Moses sprinkled it toward the heavens; and it became boils **of** blisters breaking out on mankind and on livestock.*

The sixth plague came with no warning, like the third. God told Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of "soot of a furnace" and throw it "toward the heavens in the eyes of Pharaoh." The furnace may have been a kiln for firing bricks, the very bricks Israel had been forced to make. The ash of Israel's slavery was thrown into the air, and it came down as judgment.

It became "boils breaking out in blisters on mankind and on livestock in all the land of Egypt." Painful sores covered people and animals. Egypt prided itself on its medicine and its healing gods. None of them could help.

**9:11** *And the magicians were not able to stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all Egypt.*

"The magicians were not able to stand before Moses because of the boils." Earlier the magicians tried to copy the plagues. Then they admitted, "It is the finger of God" (8:19). Now they could not even stand up in the room. The boils were "on the magicians and on all Egypt."

Egypt's wise men were out of the contest for good. We do not hear of them again. Every power that sets itself against God will fall in the end.

**9:12** *And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.*

"And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them." This is the first time in the plagues that the text says plainly that the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart. Before this, Pharaoh hardened himself again and again (7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7).

That order matters. God did not harden a man who wanted to obey. Pharaoh had refused God five times. Now God confirmed Pharaoh in the choice Pharaoh had made. Paul describes this same principle when he says that God "gave them up" to what they had chosen (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). There comes a point when continued rebellion is met with God's judgment of letting a person have what he insists on. That should make us take God's voice seriously while we can still hear it.

**9:13-14** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning, and station yourself before Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For at this time I am sending all My plagues into your heart and on your servants and on your people, so that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth.*

God sent Moses again "early in the morning" with the same demand, and a stronger warning: "For at this time I am sending all My plagues into your heart." The plagues ahead would be heavier, and they would strike Pharaoh's heart, the very thing he kept hardening.

Why? "So that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth." God was not just one god among many. He is the only true God.

**9:15-16** *For now I could have sent out My hand, and I could have struck you and your people with the pestilence, and you would have been effaced from the earth. And yet for this I have caused you to stand: in order to show you My power, and in order to recount My name in all the earth.*

These two verses explain the whole contest. "For now I could have sent out My hand, and I could have struck you and your people with the pestilence, and you would have been effaced from the earth." God could have wiped out Egypt in a moment. He held back.

"And yet for this I have caused you to stand: in order to show you My power, and in order to recount My name in all the earth." Pharaoh thought he was in charge. God says, I have let you stand. Pharaoh's life, his throne and his stubbornness were all being used for God's purpose.

And it worked. Forty years later, Rahab in Jericho said her people had heard what the LORD did in Egypt (Joshua 2:9-10). Centuries later the Philistines still spoke of it (1 Samuel 4:8). Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:17 to show that God is sovereign in mercy and in judgment. We still tell the story today. God's name has been proclaimed in all the earth.

**9:17-19** *You **are** still exalting yourself against My people, so as not to let them go. Look, I am raining about this time tomorrow a very heavy hail, the like of which has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded and until now. And now send, bring your livestock and all that **is** yours in the field to refuge; all mankind and livestock that is found in the field and is not gathered into the house, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die."'"*

"You are still exalting yourself against My people." Pharaoh's real problem was pride. God announced "a very heavy hail, the like of which has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded." Hail in Egypt was rare. A storm like this would be unheard of.

Then came mercy in the middle of judgment. "And now send, bring your livestock and all that is yours in the field to refuge." God warned the Egyptians how to save their servants and animals. He gave them a full day to act. Even in judgment, God made a way of escape for anyone who would listen.

**9:20-21** *The one fearing the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses. And whoever did not set his heart to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.*

And some did listen. "The one fearing the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses." For the first time, some Egyptians feared the word of the LORD. The plagues were working on some hearts, even if not on Pharaoh's.

"And whoever did not set his heart to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field." The same warning went to everyone. Some believed it, and some ignored it. That is still true when the gospel is preached. Each person must decide what to do with God's word.

Some of these Egyptians who feared the LORD may have been part of the "mixed multitude" who left Egypt with Israel (12:38).

**9:22-24** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, so that **there** may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on mankind and on livestock and on every plant of the field in the land of Egypt." And Moses stretched out his staff toward the heavens, and the LORD gave thunders and hail, and fire went to the earth; and the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. And **there** was hail, and fire flashing in the midst of the hail, very heavy, the like of which had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.*

Moses stretched out his staff "toward the heavens, and the LORD gave thunders and hail, and fire went to the earth." The fire was likely lightning, striking the ground in the middle of the storm. "Fire flashing in the midst of the hail, very heavy, the like of which had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation."

The Egyptians honored gods of the sky and of the weather. The LORD showed that He rules the heavens. Revelation 16:21 describes huge hailstones falling on the earth in a future day of God's wrath. The God who judged Egypt with hail will judge the whole world in the same way.

**9:25-26** *And the hail struck in all the land of Egypt all that **was** in the field, from mankind and to livestock; and every plant of the field the hail struck, and every tree of the field it shattered. Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel **were**, there was no hail.*

"The hail struck in all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, from mankind and to livestock." Plants were beaten down, and trees were shattered.

"Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail." Picture it. A wall of storm over Egypt, and calm skies over Goshen. Once again God made a clear difference between His people and those who opposed Him.

**9:27-28** *And Pharaoh sent, and he called for Moses and for Aaron, and he said to them, "I have sinned this time; the LORD **is** the righteous **one**, and I and my people **are** the wicked **ones**. Pray to the LORD, and **there has been** enough of **the** thunders of God and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall not continue to stay."*

Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said something new: "I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones." Those are good words. But "this time" gives him away. He did not see his whole life of pride as sin, only this one act. And his words came from fear of the storm, not sorrow over sin.

"Pray to the LORD," he said, "and I will let you go." He made the same promise he had broken twice before. There is a sorrow that only wants to escape the results of sin. Paul calls it the sorrow of the world, and he says it brings death (2 Corinthians 7:10). Real repentance turns from the sin itself.

**9:29-30** *And Moses said to him, "When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my palms to the LORD; the thunders shall cease, and the hail shall be no more, so that you may know that the earth **belongs** to the LORD. And you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear before the LORD God."*

Moses agreed to pray once he left the city. He would "spread out" his palms to the LORD, the open-handed posture of prayer. The storm would stop "so that you may know that the earth belongs to the LORD."

But Moses was not fooled: "I know that you do not yet fear before the LORD God." Moses prayed for Pharaoh anyway. That is a lesson for us. We pray for people even when we doubt their sincerity. Our prayers do not depend on how others respond. They depend on God.

**9:31-32** *And the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley **was in** the ear, and the flax **was in** bud. And the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they **were** late.*

Moses adds a note about the crops. The flax and barley were destroyed, because "the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bud." But "the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they were late." Spelt is a kind of wheat.

This detail fits the farming year in Egypt, where barley ripens earlier than wheat, in about January to March. It is the kind of detail an eyewitness would give. It also explains why the locusts in the next plague still had something to eat. God was still leaving room for repentance, and He spared part of the harvest.

**9:33-35** *And Moses went out from Pharaoh, out of the city, and he spread out his palms to the LORD; and the thunders and the hail ceased, and rain was not poured out on the earth. And Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders had ceased, and he continued to sin, and he made his heart heavy, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was strong, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken by the hand of Moses.*

Moses went out of the city and spread out his palms to the LORD, "and the thunders and the hail ceased." God answered the prayer at once.

And Pharaoh "continued to sin, and he made his heart heavy, he and his servants." Now Pharaoh's servants hardened their hearts with him. Some had feared the word of the LORD in verse 20, but many in the court still stood with their king. Sin spreads from leaders to those who follow them.

"Just as the LORD had spoken by the hand of Moses." Pharaoh's stubbornness did not surprise God. Every refusal was already known to Him. Nothing in this story was out of His control, and nothing in ours is either.

## Chapter 9 Summary

God sent a deadly disease on Egypt's livestock in the field, but not one animal of Israel died; Pharaoh confirmed this and still hardened his heart. Next, Moses threw furnace soot into the air, and it became boils on people and animals, and the magicians could not stand before Moses; the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart. Then God told Pharaoh He had let him stand to show His power and make His name known in all the earth. He warned of hail and told the Egyptians to bring servants and livestock to shelter; some of Pharaoh's servants feared the word of the LORD and obeyed. Hail and fire struck Egypt as never before, but not Goshen. Pharaoh admitted he had sinned and asked Moses to pray, but when the storm stopped, he and his servants hardened their hearts again.

## Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. What did the fifth plague strike, and how did God protect Israel? (9:3-6)

2. What did Pharaoh learn when he sent to check on Israel's livestock, and how did he respond? (9:7)

3. What happened to the magicians in the sixth plague? (9:11)

4. What does 9:12 say for the first time, and why does the order of the hardening matter?

5. According to 9:16, why did God let Pharaoh stand? How does Paul use this verse in Romans 9:17?

6. How did God show mercy before the hail, and how did people respond? (9:19-21)

7. What did Pharaoh confess, and why did Moses say he did not yet fear the LORD? (9:27-30)

8. What is the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow? (2 Corinthians 7:10)

9. Some Egyptians feared the word of the LORD and acted on it. What does it look like for you to take God's warnings seriously?

10. Moses prayed for Pharaoh even though he doubted his sincerity. Is there someone you have stopped praying for? Will you start again?

# Chapter 10: Locusts and Darkness

## Scripture

**10:1-11** And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I, I have made his heart heavy and the heart of his servants, in order that I may set these signs of Mine in his midst, and in order that you may recount in the ears of your son and of the son of your son how I have made sport of Egypt, and My signs which I have set among them; and you shall know that I ***am*** the LORD." And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Until when have you refused to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you ***are*** refusing to let My people go, look, I am bringing locusts into your territory tomorrow. And they shall cover the eye of the land, and ***one*** shall not be able to see the land; and they shall eat the remainder of what has escaped, what remains to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree that sprouts for you from the field. And they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all Egypt, which your fathers and the fathers of your fathers have not seen from the day they were on the ground until this day.'" And he turned, and he went out from Pharaoh. And the servants of Pharaoh said to him, "Until when shall this ***one*** be a snare to us? Let the men go, so that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt has perished?" And Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. Who and who ***are*** the ones going?" And Moses said, "With our young and with our old we will go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our herd we will go; for the festival of the LORD ***is*** ours." And he said to them, "Let the LORD be so with you, just as I will let you and your little ones go! See, for evil ***is*** before your faces. Not so! Go, please, you men, and serve the LORD, for that ***is what*** you ***are*** requesting." And ***one*** drove them out from the face of Pharaoh.

**10:12-20** And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and they may eat every plant of the land, all that the hail has left." And Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD drove an east wind in the land all that day and all the night; the morning came, and the east wind carried the locusts. And the locusts came up on all the land of Egypt, and they settled in all the territory of Egypt, very heavy; before them ***there*** had not been such locusts as them, and after them ***there*** shall not be such. And they covered the eye of all the land, and the land grew dark; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left; and not any green thing was left on the trees and on the plants of the field in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh hurried to call for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. And now, forgive, please, my sin only this time, and pray to the LORD your God, that He may remove from me only this death." And he went out from Pharaoh, and he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD turned a very strong sea wind, and it lifted the locusts, and it thrust them into the Red Sea; not one locust remained in all the territory of Egypt. And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

**10:21-29** And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, so that ***there*** may be darkness over the land of Egypt, and ***one*** may feel darkness." And Moses stretched out his hand toward the heavens, and ***there*** was darkness of gloom in all the land of Egypt three days.

They did not see each man his brother, and ***each*** man did not rise from his place three days; and for all the sons of Israel ***there*** was light in their dwellings. And Pharaoh called for Moses, and he said, "Go, serve the LORD; only your flock and your herd shall be held back; your little ones also shall go with you." And Moses said, "You also shall give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, and we will offer ***them*** to the LORD our God. And also our livestock shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for from it we will take to serve the LORD our God; and we, we do not know ***with*** what we shall serve the LORD until we come there." And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he was not willing to let them go. And Pharaoh said to him, "Go from me! Take heed to yourself; do not again see my face, for on the day you see my face you shall die." And Moses said, "Rightly you have spoken; I will not again see your face anymore."

## Chapter 10 Preview

The eighth and ninth plagues bring Egypt to the edge of ruin. God tells Moses why He is doing these signs: so that Israel will tell their children and grandchildren what the LORD did. Moses warns Pharaoh of locusts that will eat everything the hail left. Pharaoh's own servants beg him to let Israel go. Pharaoh offers to let the men go, but not the children. The locusts come, the land turns dark with them, and every green thing is eaten. Pharaoh confesses his sin again, Moses prays, and a wind drives the locusts into the Red Sea. Again Pharaoh refuses.

Then, without warning, darkness falls on Egypt for three days, a darkness so thick it can be felt. But Israel has light where they live. Pharaoh makes one last offer: the people can go, but the flocks and herds must stay. Moses refuses. Pharaoh orders Moses out and threatens him with death if he ever sees his face again. Moses answers that he will not.

## Chapter 10 Study

**10:1-2** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I, I have made his heart heavy and the heart of his servants, in order that I may set these signs of Mine in his midst, and in order that you may recount in the ears of your son and of the son of your son how I have made sport of Egypt, and My signs which I have set among them; and you shall know that I* ***am*** *the LORD."*

God told Moses, "I, I have made his heart heavy and the heart of his servants." Pharaoh had hardened his own heart many times. Now God was confirming it, and He gives the reason: "in order that I may set these signs of Mine in his midst."

Then comes a second reason, aimed at Israel: "in order that you may recount in the ears of your son and of the son of your son" what the LORD had done. The plagues were not only for Egypt. They were lessons for Israel's children and grandchildren. God wanted the story told at every table, from generation to generation. "And you shall know that I am the LORD."

This is still God's plan. Parents and grandparents are to tell their children what God has done (Psalm 78:4-7). Do the children in your life know the stories of God's faithfulness, in Scripture and in your own life?

**10:3-6** *And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Until when have you refused to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, so that they may serve Me. For if you **are** refusing to let My people go, look, I am bringing locusts into your territory tomorrow. And they shall cover the eye of the land, and **one** shall not be able to see the land; and they shall eat the remainder of what has escaped, what remains to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree that sprouts for you from the field. And they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all Egypt, which your fathers and the fathers of your fathers have not seen from the day they were on the ground until this day.'" And he turned, and he went out from Pharaoh.*

Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh a hard question from God: "Until when have you refused to humble yourself before Me?" The real issue was pride. Pharaoh would not bow.

Then the warning: locusts. They would "cover the eye of the land," so thick that no one could see the ground. They would eat whatever the hail had left and "every tree that sprouts." They would fill the houses of Egypt in numbers no one alive had ever seen.

Locusts were among the most feared disasters in the ancient world. A swarm could strip a country bare in hours and leave it facing famine. Joel 1-2 uses a locust plague as a picture of the coming day of the LORD.

This time Moses did not wait for an answer. "He turned, and he went out from Pharaoh."

**10:7** *And the servants of Pharaoh said to him, "Until when shall this **one** be a snare to us? Let the men go, so that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt has perished?"*

Pharaoh's servants had seen enough. "Until when shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go, so that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt has perished?"

Pharaoh's own advisers told him the truth. Egypt was ruined. The livestock was dead, the crops were broken, the water had been blood, and the people were covered in sores. Only Pharaoh refused to see it. Pride makes a person blind to what everyone else can see.

**10:8-9** *And Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. Who and who **are** the ones going?" And Moses said, "With our young and with our old we will go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our herd we will go; for the festival of the LORD **is** ours."*

Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron back and seemed to give in: "Go, serve the LORD your God." Then he asked, "Who and who are the ones going?" He wanted terms.

Moses was clear: "With our young and with our old we will go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our herd we will go." Everyone and everything would go. Why? "For the festival of the LORD is ours." The worship of God was for the whole family, young and old.

**10:10-11** *And he said to them, "Let the LORD be so with you, just as I will let you and your little ones go! See, for evil **is** before your faces. Not so! Go, please, you men, and serve the LORD, for that **is what** you **are** requesting." And **one** drove them out from the face of Pharaoh.*

Pharaoh exploded. "Let the LORD be so with you, just as I will let you and your little ones go!" He meant it as a curse, something like, The LORD help you if I ever let your children go. "See, for evil is before your faces." He accused them of planning to escape.

"Not so! Go, please, you men." He would let the men go and keep the women and children as hostages. Then Moses and Aaron were thrown out of the court.

Satan still makes this offer. Go and worship if you must, but leave your children with me. Many parents are glad to follow God themselves but do little to bring their children with them. God wants whole families. Joshua would later say, "And I and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

**10:12-15** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and they may eat every plant of the land, all that the hail has left." And Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD drove an east wind in the land all that day and all the night; the morning came, and the east wind carried the locusts. And the locusts came up on all the land of Egypt, and they settled in all the territory of Egypt, very heavy; before them **there** had not been such locusts as them, and after them **there** shall not be such. And they covered the eye of all the land, and the land grew dark; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left; and not any green thing was left on the trees and on the plants of the field in all the land of Egypt.*

Moses stretched out his staff, and "the LORD drove an east wind in the land all that day and all the night." By morning, the wind had brought the locusts. God used a natural means, the wind, but He controlled its timing and its strength.

The locusts covered all of Egypt, "very heavy; before them there had not been such locusts as them, and after them there shall not be such." They covered the land until "the land grew dark." They "ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left." When they were done, "not any green thing was left." Egypt, the breadbasket of the ancient world, was stripped bare.

**10:16-17** *And Pharaoh hurried to call for Moses and for Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. And now, forgive, please, my sin only this time, and pray to the LORD your God, that He may remove from me only this death."*

"Pharaoh hurried to call for Moses and for Aaron." He was desperate now. "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you." He even said, "forgive, please, my sin only this time." Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god, asked Moses for forgiveness.

But notice his words: "the LORD your God." Not my God. And "remove from me only this death." He wanted the locusts gone. He did not want God. He called the locusts "this death," because without crops, Egypt faced starvation.

**10:18-20** *And he went out from Pharaoh, and he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD turned a very strong sea wind, and it lifted the locusts, and it thrust them into the Red Sea; not one locust remained in all the territory of Egypt. And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.*

Moses prayed again, and "the LORD turned a very strong sea wind." This was a west wind, blowing from the Mediterranean Sea, and it "thrust them into the Red Sea." The SLB uses the familiar name Red Sea here. The Hebrew name is Yam Suph, which means sea of reeds. "Not one locust remained in all the territory of Egypt."

God sent the locusts with a wind, and He took them away with a wind. He controls all of nature.

"And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go." Once again, Pharaoh's confession lasted only as long as the trouble.

**10:21-23** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, so that **there** may be darkness over the land of Egypt, and **one** may feel darkness." And Moses stretched out his hand toward the heavens, and **there** was darkness of gloom in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see each man his brother, and **each** man did not rise from his place three days; and for all the sons of Israel **there** was light in their dwellings.*

The ninth plague came with no warning. Moses stretched out his hand toward the heavens, "and there was darkness of gloom in all the land of Egypt three days." It was darkness that "one may feel," thick and heavy, a darkness you could feel.

The chief god of Egypt was Ra, the sun god, and Pharaoh was called the son of Ra. For three days the sun did not shine on Egypt. Egypt's greatest god was blotted out.

"They did not see each man his brother, and each man did not rise from his place three days." People were frozen where they sat. "And for all the sons of Israel there was light in their dwellings."

Light in Goshen, darkness in Egypt. That is a picture of what God does for His people. Paul says God "rescued us out of the authority of the darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Those without Christ walk in darkness. Those who follow Him have the light of life (John 8:12).

**10:24** *And Pharaoh called for Moses, and he said, "Go, serve the LORD; only your flock and your herd shall be held back; your little ones also shall go with you."*

Pharaoh made his final offer. "Go, serve the LORD; only your flock and your herd shall be held back; your little ones also shall go with you." He had given up on keeping the children. But he still wanted the animals, which would leave Israel unable to worship, and would give them a reason to return.

**10:25-26** *And Moses said, "You also shall give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, and we will offer **them** to the LORD our God. And also our livestock shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for from it we will take to serve the LORD our God; and we, we do not know **with** what we shall serve the LORD until we come there."*

Moses refused again. Pharaoh would even have to give them "sacrifices and burnt offerings" for the LORD. A burnt offering was an animal wholly burned on the altar as an offering to God, showing that the worshiper gave himself fully to Him.

"Also our livestock shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind." Moses would not leave behind even one hoof. Why? "We, we do not know with what we shall serve the LORD until we come there." Israel did not yet know what God would ask of them. So they would take everything and hold it ready for Him.

That is a good way to live. We do not always know what God will ask of us. But if we hold everything we have ready for Him, nothing will be missing when He calls.

**10:27-29** *And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he was not willing to let them go. And Pharaoh said to him, "Go from me! Take heed to yourself; do not again see my face, for on the day you see my face you shall die." And Moses said, "Rightly you have spoken; I will not again see your face anymore."*

"And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he was not willing to let them go." Pharaoh blew up at Moses: "Go from me! Take heed to yourself; do not again see my face, for on the day you see my face you shall die."

Moses answered calmly: "Rightly you have spoken; I will not again see your face anymore." After this, Moses delivers one last message (11:4-8), and then he leaves Pharaoh's presence with burning anger. Pharaoh would call for Moses and Aaron in the night after the tenth plague (12:31), but he had shut the door on God's patience.

There is a real danger in telling God to go away. Pharaoh got what he asked for. There may come a time when God stops pleading with a hard heart. Today is the day to listen (Hebrews 3:15).

## Chapter 10 Summary

God told Moses He had hardened Pharaoh's heart so that His signs would be shown and Israel would tell their children what the LORD had done. Moses warned of locusts, and Pharaoh's servants urged him to let Israel go. Pharaoh offered to let only the men go, and drove Moses and Aaron out. An east wind brought locusts that covered and darkened the land and ate every green thing. Pharaoh confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness, Moses prayed, and a sea wind drove the locusts into the Red Sea, but Pharaoh again refused. Then thick darkness covered Egypt for three days, while Israel had light in their homes. Pharaoh offered to let the people go without their flocks and herds. Moses refused to leave a hoof behind. Pharaoh threatened Moses with death if he saw his face again, and Moses agreed he would not.

## Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. What reason did God give for these signs, especially for Israel's children? (10:1-2)

2. What question did God ask Pharaoh through Moses? (10:3)

3. What did Pharaoh's servants tell him? (10:7)

4. Who did Moses say would go, and what did Pharaoh offer instead? (10:9-11)

5. How did the locusts come, and how were they removed? (10:13, 19)

6. What was strange about the darkness, and where was there light? (10:21-23)

7. Why did Moses refuse to leave the livestock behind? (10:25-26)

8. How does the light in Israel's homes picture what Christ does for us? (Colossians 1:13; John 8:12)

9. Pharaoh wanted to keep the children in Egypt. How are you helping the children in your life follow God?

10. "We do not know with what we shall serve the LORD until we come there." Is there anything you are holding back from God that you need to hold ready for Him?

# Chapter 11: The Last Plague Announced

## Scripture

**11:1-10** And the LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets ***you*** go, completely, he will surely drive you out from here. Speak, please, in the ears of the people, that they may ask, each man from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold." And the LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt. Also the man Moses ***was*** very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people. And Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About the middle of the night I ***am*** going out into the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the female servant who ***is*** behind the hand mill, and every firstborn of livestock. And ***there*** shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, the like of which has not been, and the like of which shall not be again. And against all the sons of Israel a dog shall not sharpen its tongue, from man and to livestock, so that you may know that the LORD sets apart between Egypt and Israel.' And all these servants of yours shall come down to me, and they shall bow down to me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who ***are*** at your feet.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh with burning anger. And the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders may become many in the land of Egypt." And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go from his land.

## Chapter 11 Preview

This short chapter is the calm before the storm. God tells Moses there will be one more plague, and after it Pharaoh will not only let Israel go, he will drive them out. The people are to ask their Egyptian neighbors for silver and gold, and God gives them favor in Egypt's eyes. Even Moses is now greatly respected among the Egyptians.

Then Moses gives Pharaoh God's final warning. About midnight, the LORD Himself will go through Egypt, and every firstborn will die, from Pharaoh's son to the son of the lowest slave, and even the firstborn of the animals. A great cry will rise in Egypt. But in Israel not even a dog will growl. Moses leaves Pharaoh in hot anger, and the chapter ends with a summary: Moses and Aaron did all these wonders, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart. This is one of the most solemn chapters in the Bible, and it should be read with care.

## Chapter 11 Study

**11:1** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets* ***you*** *go, completely, he will surely drive you out from here.*

"Yet one plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt." God told Moses that this would be the last. "After that he will let you go from here."

And more than that: "When he lets you go, completely, he will surely drive you out from here." Pharaoh would not just give permission. He would push them out. God had said this from the start (6:1). The king who said, "Israel I will not let go" (5:2) would soon beg them to leave.

Many think God spoke these words to Moses before Moses' last meeting with Pharaoh ended in 10:29, and that verses 4 to 8 are what Moses said in that same meeting. That would explain how Moses could give this warning after saying he would not see Pharaoh's face again.

**11:2-3** *Speak, please, in the ears of the people, that they may ask, each man from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold." And the LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt. Also the man Moses **was** very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people.*

God told the people to "ask, each man from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold." God had promised this at the burning bush (3:21-22), and long before that He told Abraham his descendants would come out "with great possessions" (Genesis 15:14).

"And the LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt." The Egyptians had seen what God did. Many respected Israel now, and they were glad to give.

"Also the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people." The shepherd who fled for his life forty years before was now honored across the land. God had lifted him up. This is not boasting. Moses was, as Numbers 12:3 says, a very humble man. He records it because it explains why the Egyptians gave so freely.

**11:4** *And Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About the middle of the night I **am** going out into the midst of Egypt,*

Moses spoke to Pharaoh with God's words: "Thus says the LORD." What follows is the most terrible warning in the whole story.

"About the middle of the night I am going out into the midst of Egypt." The LORD Himself would go through Egypt. This last plague would not come through Aaron's staff or through Moses' hand. God would do it Himself. Moses did not give the exact date yet. Chapter 12 will show that it would come on the night of the fourteenth day of the first month.

**11:5-6** *and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the female servant who **is** behind the hand mill, and every firstborn of livestock. And **there** shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, the like of which has not been, and the like of which shall not be again.*

"And every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die." No one was too high or too low. "From the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the hand mill." The hand mill was a pair of millstones for grinding grain. It was the work of the lowest servant. Even "every firstborn of livestock" would die.

This is a hard verse, and we should not read it lightly. Why would God do this? First, it is the judgment God warned of from the beginning. Before the first plague, God told Pharaoh: Israel is My firstborn son. Let My son go. If you refuse, I will kill your firstborn (4:22-23). Pharaoh refused, again and again, through nine plagues and many months.

Second, it matches Pharaoh's own crime. Egypt had thrown Israel's baby boys into the Nile (1:22). For more than eighty years, since before Moses was born, Egypt had held God's people in cruel slavery. God's judgment came in the same measure.

Third, God is the giver of life, and He alone has the right to take it. Every person who dies, dies under God's hand. We do not understand all of God's ways. But we know He is just and that He gave many warnings. And we know He made a way of escape for everyone who would obey, as chapter 12 shows. Any Egyptian family that put its trust in the LORD and sheltered with Israel under the blood could have been spared.

"There shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, the like of which has not been, and the like of which shall not be again." Years before, Israel had cried out in Egypt (2:23). Now Egypt would cry.

**11:7** *And against all the sons of Israel a dog shall not sharpen its tongue, from man and to livestock, so that you may know that the LORD sets apart between Egypt and Israel.'*

"And against all the sons of Israel a dog shall not sharpen its tongue." In other words, not even a dog would growl at them. Egypt would be full of wailing, and Israel would be so quiet that not a dog barked.

Why? "So that you may know that the LORD sets apart between Egypt and Israel." Again and again God has made a difference between His people and Egypt (8:22; 9:4, 26; 10:23). This last plague shows it most clearly of all. But as chapter 12 will show, Israel was not spared because they were better people. They were spared because of the blood of a lamb.

**11:8** *And all these servants of yours shall come down to me, and they shall bow down to me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who **are** at your feet.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh with burning anger.*

Moses told Pharaoh that his own servants would come and bow to Moses and say, "Go out, you and all the people who are at your feet." That is just what happened (12:31-33).

"And he went out from Pharaoh with burning anger." Moses was angry. This was not the selfish anger of 2:12. It was righteous anger at a man whose pride was about to bring death to his whole land. Moses had pleaded and prayed for Pharaoh. Now there was nothing left to say.

Anger at sin and its damage is not wrong. Jesus was angry at the hardness of men's hearts (Mark 3:5). But we should notice that Moses' anger did not lead him to sin. He delivered God's message and left.

**11:9-10** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders may become many in the land of Egypt." And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go from his land.*

God told Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders may become many in the land of Egypt." God had said this from the beginning (3:19-20; 7:3-4).

The chapter closes with a summary of everything since chapter 7: "Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not let the sons of Israel go from his land."

Nine plagues had fallen. Egypt was ruined. Pharaoh still would not bow. And now the final blow was coming. If you had been in Egypt that week, would you have listened? Some Egyptians did. Many did not. God still warns before He judges. The question is whether we will listen.

## Chapter 11 Summary

The LORD told Moses there would be one last plague, after which Pharaoh would drive Israel out. The people were to ask their Egyptian neighbors for silver and gold, and God gave them favor, and Moses was greatly respected in Egypt. Moses warned Pharaoh that about midnight the LORD would go through Egypt, and every firstborn would die, from Pharaoh's son to the servant girl's son and the firstborn of the animals, and a great cry would fill the land. But among Israel not even a dog would growl, so that Egypt would know the LORD sets apart Israel from Egypt. Moses said Pharaoh's servants would bow and beg Israel to leave, and he went out in burning anger. The LORD told Moses Pharaoh would not listen, and the chapter ends by summing up the wonders and Pharaoh's hardened heart.

## Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. What did God say Pharaoh would do after the last plague? (11:1)

2. What were the people to ask from their neighbors, and how did the Egyptians respond? (11:2-3)

3. Who would go through Egypt at midnight? (11:4)

4. Who would be struck by the tenth plague? (11:5)

5. What did God say would happen among the sons of Israel, and why? (11:7)

6. How did God warn Pharaoh about this plague back in 4:22-23, and how does it connect to 1:22?

7. Why do you think Moses left Pharaoh with burning anger? Was his anger right? (11:8; Mark 3:5)

8. How does knowing that God gave many warnings help us think about this hard judgment?

9. God made a difference between Israel and Egypt. As chapter 12 will show, it was based on the blood of the lamb, not on Israel's goodness. Why does that matter for us?

10. God still warns before He judges. Is there a warning from God's Word you need to listen to today?

# Chapter 12: The Passover

## Scripture

**12:1-20** And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month ***shall be*** for you the beginning of months; it ***shall be*** first for you of the months of the year. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves, each man, a lamb for ***each*** house of fathers, a lamb for ***each*** household. And if the household is too small to be ***enough*** for a lamb, then he and his neighbor who ***is*** near to his house shall take ***one*** according to the number of souls; each man according to his eating you shall count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a son of a year; you shall take ***it*** from the sheep or from the goats. And it shall be for you for keeping until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings. And they shall take ***some*** of the blood, and they shall put ***it*** on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in this night, roasted ***with*** fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread ***and*** with bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw, or boiled at all in water, but roasted ***with*** fire, its head with its legs and with its inner parts. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning; and what is left over of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It ***is*** a Passover to the LORD. And I will pass through the land of Egypt in this night, and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from mankind and to livestock; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I ***am*** the LORD. And the blood shall be for you for a sign on the houses where you ***are***; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you, and ***there*** shall not be among you a plague for destruction when I strike in the land of Egypt. And this day shall be for you for a memorial, and you shall celebrate it ***as*** a festival to the LORD throughout your generations; ***as*** a statute forever you shall celebrate it. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; surely on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for anyone eating leavened ***bread***, that soul shall be cut off from Israel, from the first day until the seventh day. And on the first day ***there*** shall be a convocation of holiness, and on the seventh day a convocation of holiness for you; no work shall be done on them; only what is eaten by every soul, that alone may be done by you. And you shall keep the unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought out your armies from the land of Egypt; and you shall keep this day throughout your generations ***as*** a statute forever. In the first ***month***, on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening. Seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses; for anyone eating what is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether among the sojourner or among the native of the land. Anything leavened you shall not eat; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'"

**12:21-28** And Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and he said to them, "Draw out and take for yourselves flock ***animals*** according to your families, and slaughter the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and you shall dip ***it*** in the blood that ***is*** in the basin, and you shall touch the lintel and the two doorposts with ***some*** of the blood that ***is*** in the basin; and you, you shall not go out, each man from the door of his house, until morning. And the LORD will pass through to

strike Egypt, and He will see the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, and the LORD will pass over the door, and He will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike. And you shall keep this thing as a decree for you and for your sons forever. And it shall be, when you come to the land which the LORD will give to you, just as He has spoken, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your sons say to you, 'What ***is*** this service to you?' that you shall say, 'It ***is*** a sacrifice of Passover to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck Egypt, and He delivered our houses.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped. And the sons of Israel went, and they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did.

**12:29-42** And it came about in the middle of the night, and the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive who ***was*** in the house of the pit, and every firstborn of livestock. And Pharaoh rose up ***by*** night, he and all his servants and all Egypt; and ***there*** was a great cry in Egypt, for ***there*** was not a house where ***there*** was not ***one*** dead. And he called for Moses and for Aaron ***by*** night, and he said, "Rise up, go out from the midst of my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, serve the LORD as you have spoken. Both your flock and your herd take, just as you have spoken, and go; and bless me also." And Egypt urged the people, hurrying to send them away from the land, for they said, "All of us ***are*** dying." And the people carried their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs bound up in their clothes on their shoulder. And the sons of Israel did according to the word of Moses, and they asked from Egypt articles of silver and articles of gold and clothes. And the LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt, and they granted them ***what they asked***; and they plundered Egypt. And the sons of Israel set out from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, the men, apart from little ones. And also a great mixed company went up with them, and flock and herd, very numerous livestock. And they baked the dough which they had brought out from Egypt ***into*** unleavened cakes, for it was not leavened, because they had been driven out from Egypt, and they were not able to delay; and also they had not made provisions for themselves. And the dwelling of the sons of Israel, which they dwelt in Egypt, ***was*** four hundred and thirty years. And it came about at the end of four hundred and thirty years, and it came about on this very day, all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It ***is*** a night of vigils for the LORD, to bring them out from the land of Egypt; this night ***is*** for the LORD, vigils for all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.

**12:43-51** And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This ***is*** the statute of the Passover: no son of a foreign ***land*** shall eat of it. And every slave of a man, purchased with silver, and you shall circumcise him, then he may eat of it. A resident and a hired worker shall not eat of it. In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not bring out any of the flesh from the house outside; and you shall not break a bone of it. All the congregation of Israel shall do it. And when a sojourner sojourns with you, and would do the Passover to the LORD, every male of his must be circumcised, and then he may draw near to do it, and he shall be like a native of the land; and any uncircumcised ***one*** shall not eat of it. One law shall be for the native and for the sojourner who sojourns in your midst." And all the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did. And it came about on this very day, the LORD brought out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their armies.

## Chapter 12 Preview

This is one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible. Before the last plague falls, God gives Israel the Passover. Each household is to take a spotless male lamb, kill it at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month, and put its blood on the doorposts and the top of the door frame. They are to eat the roasted lamb that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, dressed and ready to leave. When the LORD passes through Egypt to strike the firstborn, He will see the blood and pass over that house. God also sets up the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to be kept every year as a memorial.

At midnight the LORD strikes every firstborn in Egypt, and a great cry goes up. Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron in the night and tells them to go. Israel leaves Egypt in a hurry, with their unleavened dough, the silver and gold of Egypt, and a mixed crowd of other people. After 430 years, on the very day, the armies of the LORD go out. The chapter ends with rules for who may eat the Passover. The New Testament tells us plainly what this chapter points to: "our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

## Chapter 12 Study

**12:1-2** *And the LORD said to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month **shall be** for you the beginning of months; it **shall be** first for you of the months of the year.*

"This month shall be for you the beginning of months." God reset Israel's calendar. From now on, their year would begin with the month of their salvation. This month is called Abib (13:4), later Nisan, in our March or April.

Salvation is a new beginning. When God saves someone, everything starts over. Paul says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Israel's life as a nation began with the Passover. Our life with God begins at the cross.

**12:3-4** *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves, each man, a lamb for **each** house of fathers, a lamb for **each** household. And if the household is too small to be **enough** for a lamb, then he and his neighbor who **is** near to his house shall take **one** according to the number of souls; each man according to his eating you shall count for the lamb.*

"On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves, each man, a lamb." Each household was to choose a lamb. If a family was too small to eat a whole lamb, they were to share with a neighbor, counting how much each person would eat. No lamb would be wasted, and no family would be left out.

Notice the steps in this chapter: a lamb, then the lamb, then your lamb (12:5). Each family had to take the lamb for itself. It is not enough to know that Christ died for the world. Each person must receive Him personally.

**12:5-6** *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a son of a year; you shall take **it** from the sheep or from the goats. And it shall be for you for keeping until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings.*

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a son of a year." It had to be perfect, young and strong, with no defect. Peter says we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). Jesus was the only spotless One who ever lived.

The lamb was kept from the tenth day "until the fourteenth day of this month." For four days the family lived with the lamb and could see that it had no defect. Many have noticed that Jesus entered Jerusalem in the days before the Passover and was examined by the priests, the Pharisees and Pilate, who said he found no guilt in Him (John 18:38).

"All the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings," which means at twilight, in the late afternoon. Jesus died at about the ninth hour, three in the afternoon (Mark 15:34-37), and many have noticed that this was about the hour of the day when the Passover lambs were killed.

**12:7** *And they shall take **some** of the blood, and they shall put **it** on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they eat it.*

"They shall take some of the blood, and they shall put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel." The lintel is the beam across the top of the door. The blood had to be applied. A lamb killed but whose blood was left in the basin would not protect anyone.

This is the heart of the gospel in picture. Christ's death is enough for all, but each person must take it by faith for himself. Hebrews 11:28 says Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood "by faith."

**12:8-10** *And they shall eat the flesh in this night, roasted **with** fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread **and** with bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw, or boiled at all in water, but roasted **with** fire, its head with its legs and with its inner parts. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning; and what is left over of it until morning you shall burn with fire.*

They were to eat the lamb that night, "roasted with fire," with "unleavened bread" and "bitter herbs." Not raw, not boiled, but roasted whole, "its head with its legs and with its inner parts." Nothing was to be left until morning. Anything left over was to be burned.

Each part had meaning. The lamb roasted with fire pictures the judgment that fell on our substitute. The bitter herbs reminded them of the bitterness of slavery (1:14). Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast. It was the bread of haste, since there was no time for dough to rise. Leaven, or yeast, spreads through a whole lump of dough, and in the Bible it often pictures sin (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

**12:11** *And thus you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It **is** a Passover to the LORD.*

"Your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand." To gird the loins meant to tuck a long robe into the belt so a person could move quickly. They were to eat dressed for travel, "in haste," ready to leave at any moment.

"It is a Passover to the LORD." This is the first time the word Passover is used. It means that the LORD would pass over the homes marked by the blood. Those who have been saved by the blood of Christ should live ready to go. We are pilgrims here, looking for His return (Titus 2:13).

**12:12-13** *And I will pass through the land of Egypt in this night, and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from mankind and to livestock; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I **am** the LORD. And the blood shall be for you for a sign on the houses where you **are**; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you, and **there** shall not be among you a plague for destruction when I strike in the land of Egypt.*

"I will pass through the land of Egypt in this night, and I will strike every firstborn." God said He would judge "all the gods of Egypt." The last plague would show that none of them could protect even Pharaoh's own son.

"And the blood shall be for you for a sign on the houses where you are; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you." God did not say, When I see how good you are. He said, "I will see the blood." Israel's safety did not depend on their goodness. It depended on the blood. An Israelite home without the blood would have suffered like an Egyptian home. An Egyptian home under the blood would have been safe.

That is still God's way. We are not saved by our goodness or our feelings. We are saved because God sees the blood of His Son. Hebrews 9:22 says "apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

**12:14** *And this day shall be for you for a memorial, and you shall celebrate it **as** a festival to the LORD throughout your generations; **as** a statute forever you shall celebrate it.*

"This day shall be for you for a memorial." Israel was to celebrate the Passover every year "throughout your generations," as "a statute forever." God wanted His people never to forget.

Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples the night before He died. He took the bread and said, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this for My remembrance" (Luke 22:19). The Lord's Supper was born at a Passover table. When Christians share the Lord's Supper, we remember the true Lamb, as Israel remembered the night in Egypt.

**12:15-17** *Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; surely on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for anyone eating leavened **bread**, that soul shall be cut off from Israel, from the first day until the seventh day. And on the first day **there** shall be a convocation of holiness, and on the seventh day a convocation of holiness for you; no work shall be done on them; only what is eaten by every soul, that alone may be done by you. And you shall keep the unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought out your armies from the land of Egypt; and you shall keep this day throughout your generations **as** a statute forever.*

The Passover was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the month (12:18). "On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses." Anyone who ate leaven during those days would be "cut off from Israel," meaning removed from the community, and possibly put to death by God.

There would be "a convocation of holiness," a holy gathering, on the first and seventh days, with no work except preparing food. These were days of rest and worship.

Why remove all leaven? Because "on this very day I brought out your armies from the land of Egypt." Paul applies it to us: Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, so "cleanse out the old leaven" and live with sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Salvation comes first, by the blood. Then a clean life follows.

**12:18-20** *In the first **month**, on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening. Seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses; for anyone eating what is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether among the sojourner or among the native of the land. Anything leavened you shall not eat; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'"*

God repeated the dates: from the evening of the fourteenth to the evening of the twenty-first. No leaven was to be found in any house. The rule applied "whether among the sojourner or among the native of the land." A sojourner, or foreigner living among Israel, who joined in the feast was under the same rule. God's way was the same for everyone.

**12:21-23** *And Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and he said to them, "Draw out and take for yourselves flock **animals** according to your families, and slaughter the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and you shall dip **it** in the blood that **is** in the basin, and you shall touch the lintel and the two doorposts with **some** of the blood that **is** in the basin; and you, you shall not go out, each man from the door of his house, until morning. And the LORD will pass through to strike Egypt, and He will see the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, and the LORD will pass over the door, and He will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike.*

Moses passed God's command to the elders: "Draw out and take for yourselves flock animals according to your families, and slaughter the Passover."

They were to take "a bunch of hyssop," a small plant with leafy stems, good for sprinkling. They were to dip it in the blood and touch the lintel and doorposts. Hyssop would later be used in

cleansing (Leviticus 14:4; Psalm 51:7). A sponge on a hyssop branch was lifted to Jesus on the cross (John 19:29).

"And you, you shall not go out, each man from the door of his house, until morning." Safety was only inside the house under the blood. "The LORD will pass over the door, and He will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses."

**12:24-27** *And you shall keep this thing as a decree for you and for your sons forever. And it shall be, when you come to the land which the LORD will give to you, just as He has spoken, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your sons say to you, 'What **is** this service to you?' that you shall say, 'It **is** a sacrifice of Passover to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck Egypt, and He delivered our houses.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped.*

Israel was to keep this "forever," even after they entered the land. And God expected the children to ask, "What is this service to you?" Parents were to answer: "It is a sacrifice of Passover to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt."

God built teaching into the worship. The children would see the lamb, the blood and the bitter herbs, and they would ask. Our children should see and hear our faith too, and we should be ready to tell them what God has done.

"And the people bowed low and worshiped." They believed God's word before the night came.

**12:28** *And the sons of Israel went, and they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did.*

"The sons of Israel went, and they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did." This short verse matters. Saving faith obeys. Israel did not argue about the blood or try another way. They did what God said. James 2:17 says that faith without works is dead. Israel's faith showed itself in a lamb killed and blood applied.

**12:29-30** *And it came about in the middle of the night, and the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive who **was** in the house of the pit, and every firstborn of livestock. And Pharaoh rose up **by** night, he and all his servants and all Egypt; and **there** was a great cry in Egypt, for **there** was not a house where **there** was not **one** dead.*

"And it came about in the middle of the night, and the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt." Every word of God's warning came true. From Pharaoh's son "to the firstborn of the captive who was in the house of the pit," meaning the prisoner in the dungeon. Not even the livestock were spared.

"There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead." This is a heavy verse. We should not read it with any kind of glee. God had warned for months, and Pharaoh refused. Many people suffered because of their king's pride. God's judgment is real, and it is just, and it is terrible. That is why God provided the Lamb.

**12:31-32** *And he called for Moses and for Aaron **by** night, and he said, "Rise up, go out from the midst of my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, serve the LORD as you have spoken. Both your flock and your herd take, just as you have spoken, and go; and bless me also."*

Pharaoh "called for Moses and for Aaron by night." The proud king was broken. "Rise up, go out from the midst of my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, serve the LORD as you have spoken." No more bargaining. The children, the flocks, the herds, everything could go, "just as you have spoken."

And then: "bless me also." The man who said, "I do not know the LORD" (5:2) now asked for a blessing from the LORD's servants.

**12:33-36** *And Egypt urged the people, hurrying to send them away from the land, for they said, "All of us **are** dying." And the people carried their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs bound up in their clothes on their shoulder. And the sons of Israel did according to the word of Moses, and they asked from Egypt articles of silver and articles of gold and clothes. And the LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt, and they granted them **what they asked**; and they plundered Egypt.*

"Egypt urged the people, hurrying to send them away from the land, for they said, All of us are dying." The Egyptians wanted Israel gone as fast as possible.

Israel left so quickly that "the people carried their dough before it was leavened," wrapped in their clothes on their shoulders. And they asked the Egyptians for silver, gold and clothing, as God had told them (3:22; 11:2). "The LORD gave the favor of the people in the eyes of Egypt." Slaves who had nothing walked out with the wealth of Egypt. Much of it would later be given to build the tabernacle (35:22).

**12:37-39** *And the sons of Israel set out from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, the men, apart from little ones. And also a great mixed company went up with them, and flock and herd, very numerous livestock. And they baked the dough which they had brought out from Egypt **into** unleavened cakes, for it was not leavened, because they had been driven out from Egypt, and they were not able to delay; and also they had not made provisions for themselves.*

"The sons of Israel set out from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, the men, apart from little ones." With women and children, the total would have been about two million people or more. I take the number as written. Some scholars read the Hebrew word for thousand as a clan or military unit, which would make the number much smaller, but Numbers 1:46 gives a careful count of 603,550 men that is hard to read that way.

"A great mixed company went up with them." These were people who were not Israelites, likely Egyptians and others who had seen God's power and chose to go with His people. God's salvation was open to anyone who would come.

They baked "unleavened cakes" on the road, because they "had been driven out from Egypt, and they were not able to delay." The unleavened bread of the feast would always remind them of that night.

**12:40-42** *And the dwelling of the sons of Israel, which they dwelt in Egypt,* ***was*** *four hundred and thirty years. And it came about at the end of four hundred and thirty years, and it came about on this very day, all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It* ***is*** *a night of vigils for the LORD, to bring them out from the land of Egypt; this night* ***is*** *for the LORD, vigils for all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.*

"The dwelling of the sons of Israel, which they dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." God had told Abraham his descendants would be afflicted about four hundred years (Genesis 15:13). Bible teachers count the 430 years in two main ways. Some count it as Israel's whole time in Egypt. Others count from God's promise to Abraham, because Paul says the law came "four hundred and thirty years" after the promise (Galatians 3:17), which would put Israel's time in Egypt at about 215 years. Either way, God kept His timetable "on this very day."

"It is a night of vigils for the LORD." The LORD kept watch over Israel that night, and Israel was to keep watch every year in remembrance. Psalm 121:4 says the One who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

**12:43-45** *And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This* ***is*** *the statute of the Passover: no son of a foreign* ***land*** *shall eat of it. And every slave of a man, purchased with silver, and you shall circumcise him, then he may eat of it. A resident and a hired worker shall not eat of it.*

God gave the rules for who could eat the Passover. "No son of a foreign land shall eat of it," meaning an outsider who had not joined Israel. A purchased slave could eat it once he was circumcised, because he was then part of the household of faith. "A resident and a hired worker," people living among them only for a time, could not eat it.

The Passover was a meal for those inside the covenant. In the same way, the Lord's Supper is for those who belong to Christ (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

**12:46-47** *In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not bring out any of the flesh from the house outside; and you shall not break a bone of it. All the congregation of Israel shall do it.*

"In one house it shall be eaten." The lamb was eaten together by the household. "And you shall not break a bone of it." When Jesus died, the soldiers broke the legs of the two men crucified with Him, but not His legs, because He was already dead. John tells us this happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "A bone of His will not be broken" (John 19:36). Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, down to the smallest detail.

"All the congregation of Israel shall do it." No Israelite was excused.

**12:48-49** *And when a sojourner sojourns with you, and would do the Passover to the LORD, every male of his must be circumcised, and then he may draw near to do it, and he shall be like a native of the land; and any uncircumcised* ***one*** *shall not eat of it. One law shall be for the native and for the sojourner who sojourns in your midst."*

"When a sojourner sojourns with you, and would do the Passover to the LORD, every male of his must be circumcised." Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham

(Genesis 17:10-14). A foreigner could join Israel's worship if he joined the covenant. "He shall be like a native of the land."

"One law shall be for the native and for the sojourner who sojourns in your midst." The door was open to outsiders from the start. God's plan was always to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3). In Christ, that door has been opened wide to all who believe (Ephesians 2:12-13).

**12:50-51** *And all the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did. And it came about on this very day, the LORD brought out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their armies.*

"All the sons of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did." Obedience is repeated again (12:28).

"On this very day, the LORD brought out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their armies." It was the LORD who brought them out. Moses led, and Israel walked, but the salvation was God's. Four hundred thirty years of waiting ended in one night. God's promises can take a long time, but they are never late.

## Chapter 12 Summary

God made the month of the exodus the first month of Israel's year. Each household was to choose a spotless year-old male lamb, keep it four days, kill it at twilight on the fourteenth, put its blood on the doorposts and lintel, and eat it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, dressed and ready to leave. When the LORD struck the firstborn of Egypt, He would see the blood and pass over. The Passover and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread were to be kept every year, and children were to be taught their meaning. At midnight the LORD struck every firstborn in Egypt, and Pharaoh urged Israel to go. The people left in haste with their unleavened dough and the silver and gold of Egypt, about 600,000 men plus families and a mixed company, after 430 years, on the very day. God ruled that only the circumcised could eat the Passover, with one law for native and sojourner, and that no bone of the lamb could be broken. The New Testament shows that Christ is our Passover Lamb.

## Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. What did God say about this month, and why? (12:2)

2. What kind of lamb was to be chosen, and how long was it kept? (12:3-6)

3. What were they to do with the blood, and what did God promise when He saw it? (12:7, 13)

4. How were they to eat the Passover, and why? (12:8-11)

5. What was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and what does leaven often picture? (12:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

6. What were parents to tell their children when they asked about the Passover? (12:26-27)

7. What happened at midnight, and how did Pharaoh respond? (12:29-32)

8. How does the New Testament connect the Passover lamb to Jesus? (1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; John 19:36)

9. Israel was safe because of the blood, not because they were better than Egypt. What does that teach you about how you are saved?

10. Israel ate the Passover dressed and ready to go. What would it look like for you to live ready for Christ's return?

# Chapter 13: The Firstborn and the Pillar of Cloud

## Scripture

**13:1-16** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me every firstborn, what opens every womb among the sons of Israel, among mankind and among livestock; it ***is*** Mine." And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day, on which you went out from Egypt, from a house of slaves; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from here; and leavened ***bread*** shall not be eaten. Today you ***are*** going out, in the month of Abib. And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give to you, a land flowing ***with*** milk and honey, that you shall serve this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day ***there shall be*** a festival to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten the seven days; and leavened ***bread*** shall not be seen with you, and leaven shall not be seen with you in all your territory. And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, '***It is*** because of what the LORD did for me when I came out from Egypt.' And it shall be for you for a sign on your hand and for a memorial between your eyes, so that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD brought you out from Egypt. And you shall keep this statute at its appointed time from days to days. And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite, just as He swore to you and to your fathers, and He gives it to you, that you shall cause everything that opens a womb to pass over to the LORD, and everything that opens, offspring of livestock which you have; the males ***shall be*** the LORD's. And everything that opens ***the womb*** of a donkey you shall ransom with a lamb; and if you do not ransom ***it***, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of mankind among your sons you shall ransom. And it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What ***is*** this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from a house of slaves. And it came about, when Pharaoh made ***it*** hard to let us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of mankind and to the firstborn of livestock. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD everything that opens a womb, the males, and every firstborn of my sons I ransom.' And it shall be for a sign on your hand and for frontlets between your eyes; for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt."

**13:17-22** And it came about, when Pharaoh let the people go, that God did not lead them ***by*** the way of the land of the Philistines, for it ***was*** near; for God said, "Lest the people regret when they see war, and they return to Egypt." And God led the people around ***by*** the way of the wilderness ***to*** the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up armed from the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had certainly made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will certainly visit you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you." And they set out from Succoth, and they encamped at Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD ***was*** going before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them ***on*** the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to them, to go by day and by night. The pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of the fire by night did not depart from before the people.

## Chapter 13 Preview

Israel is free, and God now tells them how to remember. Every firstborn male in Israel, of people and of animals, belongs to the LORD, because He spared Israel's firstborn on the night He struck Egypt's. Firstborn animals fit for sacrifice are to be offered, a firstborn donkey is to be bought back with a lamb, and every firstborn son is to be redeemed. Moses also repeats the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and twice tells parents what to say when their children ask what it means.

Then the journey begins. God does not lead Israel by the short road along the coast, where they would meet the Philistines and might turn back in fear. He leads them the long way, toward the Red Sea. Moses carries Joseph's bones, keeping a promise made four hundred years before. And the LORD Himself goes before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, never leaving them.

## Chapter 13 Study

**13:1-2** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me every firstborn, what opens every womb among the sons of Israel, among mankind and among livestock; it **is** Mine."*

"Consecrate to Me every firstborn." To consecrate means to set apart for God. Every firstborn male, "among mankind and among livestock," belonged to the LORD. "It is Mine."

Why? Because on Passover night, God spared Israel's firstborn by the blood of the lamb. Those sons were alive because God had bought them. Now they belonged to Him. Later God would take the tribe of Levi in place of the firstborn of all Israel to serve Him in the tabernacle (Numbers 3:11-13).

Paul says something very close to this about believers: "you are not your own; for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). If Christ has redeemed you, you belong to Him.

**13:3-4** *And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day, on which you went out from Egypt, from a house of slaves; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from here; and leavened **bread** shall not be eaten. Today you **are** going out, in the month of Abib.*

"Remember this day, on which you went out from Egypt, from a house of slaves." Egypt is called "a house of slaves." God wanted Israel to remember where they had been, so they would never want to go back.

"By strength of hand the LORD brought you out from here." Israel did not free themselves. God did.

"Today you are going out, in the month of Abib." Abib means ear of grain. It was the spring month when barley ripened. It was a season of new life, and Israel's new life began in it.

**13:5-7** *And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give to you, a land flowing **with** milk and honey, that you shall serve this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day **there shall be** a festival to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten the seven days; and leavened **bread** shall not be seen with you, and leaven shall not be seen with you in all your territory.*

When they entered "a land flowing with milk and honey," they were to keep "this service in this month." Seven days of unleavened bread, with "a festival to the LORD" on the seventh day.

"Leavened bread shall not be seen with you, and leaven shall not be seen with you in all your territory." Not just in the house, but in all their land. Israel's freedom from Egypt was to be matched by a clean break from the old life. God wants His people's whole lives marked by what He has done.

**13:8-10** *And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, '**It is** because of what the LORD did for me when I came out from Egypt.' And it shall be for you for a sign on your hand and for a memorial between your eyes, so that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD brought you out from Egypt. And you shall keep this statute at its appointed time from days to days.*

"And you shall tell your son on that day." The father was to say it was "because of what the LORD did for me when I came out from Egypt." Notice the word "me." Each father was to tell the story as his own. Even generations later, every Israelite was to see himself in the story. The LORD did this for me.

"It shall be for you for a sign on your hand and for a memorial between your eyes, so that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth." The feast would be like a reminder tied to the hand and placed before the eyes. Later, many Jews took this and Deuteronomy 6:8 as a command to wear small boxes holding Scripture, called phylacteries or tefillin. Jesus spoke of them in Matthew 23:5. Whether worn or not, the point is plain: God's saving acts should shape what we do, what we see and what we say.

**13:11-13** *And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite, just as He swore to you and to your fathers, and He gives it to you, that you shall cause everything that opens a womb to pass over to the LORD, and everything that opens, offspring of livestock which you have; the males **shall be** the LORD's. And everything that opens **the womb** of a donkey you shall ransom with a lamb; and if you do not ransom **it**, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of mankind among your sons you shall ransom.*

When they entered the land, Israel was to "cause everything that opens a womb to pass over to the LORD." The firstborn males of clean animals, such as cattle, sheep and goats, were sacrificed.

A donkey was an unclean animal. It could not be offered as a sacrifice. So "everything that opens the womb of a donkey you shall ransom with a lamb." A lamb died in its place. If the owner would not redeem it, "then you shall break its neck." It could not be kept as if it did not belong to God.

"And every firstborn of mankind among your sons you shall ransom." Sons were never sacrificed. Israel was never to offer children to God the way the pagans did. Each firstborn son was bought back, later with five shekels of silver (Numbers 18:15-16). Mary and Joseph brought Jesus, Mary's firstborn, to the temple to present Him to the Lord in keeping with this law (Luke 2:22-23).

Notice that the unclean donkey had to be redeemed by a lamb or die. That is a picture of us. We were unclean and could not come to God on our own. Without a Lamb in our place, we would die. Christ is that Lamb.

**13:14-16** *And it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What **is** this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from a house of slaves. And it came about, when Pharaoh made **it** hard to let us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of mankind and to the firstborn of livestock. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD everything that opens a womb, the males, and every firstborn of my sons I ransom.' And it shall be for a sign on your hand and for frontlets between your eyes; for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt."*

Once again, Moses expects children to ask questions. The son would ask, "What is this?" Then the father was to tell how "by strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from a house of slaves," and how the LORD killed Egypt's firstborn when Pharaoh refused. "Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD everything that opens a womb, the males, and every firstborn of my sons I ransom."

Each time a firstborn lamb was offered or a son was redeemed, the family retold the story. God tied memory to daily life. We need the same. Faith is passed on best not only in church, but at the dinner table, in the car and in the questions children ask.

**13:17-18** *And it came about, when Pharaoh let the people go, that God did not lead them **by** the way of the land of the Philistines, for it **was** near; for God said, "Lest the people regret when they see war, and they return to Egypt." And God led the people around **by** the way of the wilderness **to** the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up armed from the land of Egypt.*

"God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, for it was near." The coastal road was the shortest way to Canaan, but it was guarded by Egyptian forts and led into Philistine land. "Lest the people regret when they see war, and they return to Egypt."

God knew His people. They had been slaves their whole lives, not soldiers. A battle so soon would break them. So He took them the long way. The shortest road is not always God's road. Sometimes He leads us the long way because He knows what we are ready for.

He "led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea." The SLB says the Red Sea, the familiar name. The Hebrew is Yam Suph, sea of reeds. The exact place where Israel crossed is debated, but Scripture is clear that it was a real sea, deep enough to drown Pharaoh's army (14:28).

"The sons of Israel went up armed." The word may mean in battle array, or organized in ranks. They left as an orderly people, not a mob.

**13:19** *And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had certainly made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will certainly visit you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you."*

"Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." Joseph had made Israel swear: "God will certainly visit you, and you shall bring up my bones from here" (Genesis 50:25). Joseph believed God's promise so firmly that he gave orders about his burial in a land he would never see. Hebrews 11:22 counts this as an act of faith.

For about four centuries, Joseph's coffin had waited in Egypt. Now it went with Israel. It would be buried in Shechem when they entered the land (Joshua 24:32). Every Israelite who saw that coffin was reminded: God keeps His word, even if it takes centuries.

**13:20-22** *And they set out from Succoth, and they encamped at Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD **was** going before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them **on** the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to them, to go by day and by night. The pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of the fire by night did not depart from before the people.*

They camped at Etham, "at the edge of the wilderness." And then this: "the LORD was going before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to them."

God did not give Israel a map. He gave them Himself. The cloud showed them where to go, gave shade from the desert sun, and showed that He was with them. The fire gave light and warmth in the dark. In 14:19 the pillar is linked with "the angel of God."

"The pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of the fire by night did not depart from before the people." Not once. Through all their grumbling and all their failures in the wilderness, the cloud stayed for forty years (Nehemiah 9:19).

Believers today have the Holy Spirit living in us, and God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). We may not see a pillar of cloud, but we are never without His presence.

## Chapter 13 Summary

The LORD claimed every firstborn male of Israel, people and animals, as His own. Moses told the people to remember the day they left Egypt and to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the land, explaining it to their sons as what the LORD did for them. Firstborn animals were to be offered to the LORD, firstborn donkeys redeemed with a lamb, and firstborn sons ransomed, and fathers were to explain this when their sons asked. God led Israel not by the short road through Philistine land, lest they lose heart at the sight of war, but by the wilderness road toward the Red Sea. Moses took Joseph's bones, as Joseph had asked. From Succoth they camped at Etham, and the LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, never leaving them.

## Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. What did God claim as His own, and why? (13:1-2)

2. What does "a house of slaves" tell us about how God wanted Israel to think of Egypt? (13:3)

3. What were fathers to tell their sons about the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (13:8)

4. What was to happen to a firstborn donkey and a firstborn son? (13:13)

5. Why did God lead Israel the long way? (13:17-18)

6. Why did Moses take Joseph's bones, and what does Hebrews 11:22 say about it? (13:19)

7. How did the LORD guide Israel, and how long did it last? (13:21-22)

8. How does the unclean donkey redeemed by a lamb picture what Christ has done for us? (13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

9. Has God ever taken you the long way? Looking back, what did He protect you from or teach you?

10. Israel's children were expected to ask questions. What stories of God's faithfulness do you need to tell the next generation?

# Chapter 14: Crossing the Red Sea

## Scripture

**14:1-14** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon; opposite it you shall encamp by the sea. And Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They ***are*** wandering in confusion in the land; the wilderness has shut ***in*** on them.' And I will strengthen the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army, and Egypt will know that I ***am*** the LORD." And they did so. And it was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What ***is*** this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" And he harnessed his chariot, and he took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariotry of Egypt, and officers over all of it. And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the sons of Israel; and the sons of Israel ***were*** going out with a raised hand. And Egypt pursued after them, and they overtook them encamped by the sea, every horse of the chariotry of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army, by Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon. And Pharaoh drew near, and the sons of Israel lifted up their eyes, and look, Egypt ***was*** marching after them; and they were very afraid, and the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. And they said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt ***that*** you have taken us to die in the wilderness? What ***is*** this you have done to us, by bringing us out from Egypt? ***Is*** not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Cease from us, and let us serve Egypt'? For serving Egypt ***is*** better for us than our dying in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will do for you today; for Egypt, whom you have seen today, you shall not again see them anymore, forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you, you shall keep silent."

**14:15-25** And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the sons of Israel, that they set out. And you, raise your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it, so that the sons of Israel may go into the midst of the sea on the dry land. And I, look, I am strengthening the heart of Egypt, so that they may go in after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army, in his chariots and in his horsemen. And Egypt will know that I ***am*** the LORD, when I am glorified in Pharaoh, in his chariots and in his horsemen." And the angel of God, who ***was*** going before the camp of Israel, set out and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud set out from before them and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and ***there*** was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit up the night; and this ***one*** did not come near to that ***one*** all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go by a strong east wind all the night, and He made the sea into dry ground; and the waters were split. And the sons of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters ***were*** a wall for them on their right and on their left. And Egypt pursued, and they went in after them, every horse of Pharaoh, his chariotry and his horsemen, into the midst of the sea. And it came about in the morning watch, and the LORD looked down on the camp of Egypt in the pillar of fire and cloud, and He threw the camp of Egypt into confusion. And He removed the wheels of

its chariots, and He made it drive with heaviness; and Egypt said, "Let me flee from before Israel, for the LORD ***is*** fighting for them against Egypt."

**14:26-31** And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may return on Egypt, on its chariots and on its horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned at the turning of morning to its enduring ***flow***; and Egypt ***was*** fleeing to meet it; and the LORD shook off Egypt in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and they covered the chariots and the horsemen of all the army of Pharaoh that had gone in after them into the sea; not even one remained among them. And the sons of Israel walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters ***were*** a wall for them on their right and on their left. And the LORD saved Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt, and Israel saw Egypt dead on the shore of the sea. And Israel saw the great hand which the LORD had worked against Egypt, and the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in Moses His servant.

## Chapter 14 Preview

God tells Moses to turn back and camp by the sea. It looks like a terrible mistake. Pharaoh thinks Israel is lost in the desert, and he changes his mind about letting them go. He takes six hundred of his best chariots and the whole army of Egypt and chases them down. Israel is trapped, with the sea in front and the army behind. The people panic and turn on Moses. Moses answers with one of the great verses of faith in the Bible: "Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD."

God tells Moses to lift his staff over the sea. The pillar of cloud moves behind Israel and stands between them and Egypt all night. A strong east wind splits the waters, and Israel walks through on dry ground, with walls of water on both sides. When the Egyptians follow, God throws them into confusion, and at dawn the sea returns and covers the whole army. Israel sees the great hand of the LORD, and they fear the LORD and believe in Him and in His servant Moses.

## Chapter 14 Study

**14:1-2** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon; opposite it you shall encamp by the sea.*

God told Moses to have Israel "turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon." We don't know exactly where these places were. What we do know is that God led them into what looked like a dead end, with the sea in front of them.

Notice that God led them there. They did not get lost. Sometimes God leads His people into places where there is no way out except Him.

**14:3-4** *And Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They **are** wandering in confusion in the land; the wilderness has shut **in** on them.' And I will strengthen the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army, and Egypt will know that I **am** the LORD." And they did so.*

God told Moses what Pharaoh would think: "They are wandering in confusion in the land; the wilderness has shut in on them." Israel's position looked weak. God was setting a trap, and Israel was the bait.

"I will strengthen the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army." God would gain glory through Pharaoh's last act of rebellion. "And Egypt will know that I am the LORD."

"And they did so." Israel obeyed even though it made no sense to them. Faith often means obeying first and understanding later.

**14:5-7** *And it was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What **is** this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" And he harnessed his chariot, and he took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariotry of Egypt, and officers over all of it.*

When Pharaoh heard that the people had fled, "the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people." The grief of the night of Passover had passed. Now they thought about what they had lost: "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" They missed their slaves.

Pharaoh "took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariotry of Egypt, and officers over all of it." Chariots were the most feared weapon of the ancient world, fast and deadly against people on foot. Egypt sent its best against a crowd of former slaves with their families and flocks.

Sin is like that. When we leave it, it often comes after us to drag us back. The enemy does not let go of his slaves easily.

**14:8-9** *And the LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the sons of Israel; and the sons of Israel **were** going out with a raised hand. And Egypt pursued after them, and they overtook them encamped by the sea, every horse of the chariotry of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army, by Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.*

"The LORD strengthened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the sons of Israel." Meanwhile, "the sons of Israel were going out with a raised hand," which means boldly, openly, with confidence.

Egypt overtook them "encamped by the sea." Horses, chariots, horsemen and soldiers lined up against them by Pi-hahiroth.

**14:10** *And Pharaoh drew near, and the sons of Israel lifted up their eyes, and look, Egypt **was** marching after them; and they were very afraid, and the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD.*

"Pharaoh drew near, and the sons of Israel lifted up their eyes, and look, Egypt was marching after them." Their confidence was gone in a moment. "They were very afraid, and the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD."

Crying out to the LORD was the right thing to do. Their trouble was not that they prayed. It was what they said next.

**14:11-12** *And they said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt **that** you have taken us to die in the wilderness? What **is** this you have done to us, by bringing us out from Egypt? **Is** not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Cease from us, and let us serve Egypt'? For serving Egypt **is** better for us than our dying in the wilderness."*

They turned on Moses with bitter sarcasm: "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the wilderness?" Egypt was famous for its tombs and pyramids. They mocked Moses as if he had brought them out to bury them.

"For serving Egypt is better for us than our dying in the wilderness." Only days before, they had walked out free. Now they wished they were slaves again. This is the first of many times Israel will want to go back to Egypt.

How quickly fear makes us forget what God has done. Ten plagues and a Passover night were behind them, and still they panicked. Before we judge them, we should ask ourselves how often we have done the same.

**14:13-14** *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will do for you today; for Egypt, whom you have seen today, you shall not again see them anymore, forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you, you shall keep silent."*

Moses' answer is one of the great words of faith in Scripture. "Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will do for you today."

Three commands. Do not be afraid. Stand still. Watch God save. Salvation here means rescue, deliverance from danger. It would be the LORD's work, not theirs. "For Egypt, whom you have seen today, you shall not again see them anymore, forever."

"The LORD will fight for you, and you, you shall keep silent." There was nothing for Israel to do but trust. That is how God saves sinners. We cannot fight our way out of sin and death. Christ has fought for us and won. Our part is to stop striving and trust Him (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**14:15-16** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the sons of Israel, that they set out. And you, raise your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it, so that the sons of Israel may go into the midst of the sea on the dry land.*

"Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the sons of Israel, that they set out." There is a time to stand still and a time to move. Moses may have been praying aloud. God told him it was time to act. Prayer is never wrong, but when God has already spoken, we are to obey.

"Raise your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it, so that the sons of Israel may go into the midst of the sea on the dry land." God's command looked impossible: walk forward into the sea. But God had a road where no one else could see one.

**14:17-18** *And I, look, I am strengthening the heart of Egypt, so that they may go in after them; and I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army, in his chariots and in his horsemen. And Egypt will know that I **am** the LORD, when I am glorified in Pharaoh, in his chariots and in his horsemen."*

"I, look, I am strengthening the heart of Egypt, so that they may go in after them." Egypt would follow Israel into the sea. God's purpose: "I will be glorified in Pharaoh and in all his army, in his chariots and in his horsemen. And Egypt will know that I am the LORD." The repeated phrase "Egypt will know" runs through the whole story of the plagues. At the sea, they would know.

**14:19-20** *And the angel of God, who **was** going before the camp of Israel, set out and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud set out from before them and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and **there** was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit up the night; and this **one** did not come near to that **one** all the night.*

"The angel of God, who was going before the camp of Israel, set out and went behind them." The pillar of cloud moved too, and stood between the two camps. The same God who led them from the front now guarded them from behind.

"There was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit up the night." To Egypt it was darkness. To Israel it gave light. The same presence of God that brings light to His people brings darkness to His enemies. Paul says the gospel is a fragrance of life to some and of death to others (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

"This one did not come near to that one all the night." Egypt could not touch Israel. God stood between them.

**14:21-22** *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go by a strong east wind all the night, and He made the sea into dry ground; and the waters were split. And the sons of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters **were** a wall for them on their right and on their left.*

"Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go by a strong east wind all the night." God used a wind, as He had with the locusts. But no ordinary wind splits a sea so that "the waters were a wall for them on their right and on their left." This was a miracle.

"The sons of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry land." Not mud. Dry land. Imagine two million people, children and old men, flocks and herds, walking all night between walls of water.

Hebrews 11:29 says they passed through the Red Sea "by faith." It took faith to take the first step into that path. Paul says Israel was "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2). Going through the sea, they were joined to Moses as their leader and cut off from Egypt for good. It is a picture of how believers are joined to Christ and cut off from the old life (Romans 6:4).

**14:23-25** *And Egypt pursued, and they went in after them, every horse of Pharaoh, his chariotry and his horsemen, into the midst of the sea. And it came about in the morning watch, and the LORD looked down on the camp of Egypt in the pillar of fire and cloud, and He threw the camp of Egypt into confusion. And He removed the wheels of its chariots, and He made it drive with heaviness; and Egypt said, "Let me flee from before Israel, for the LORD **is** fighting for them against Egypt."*

"Egypt pursued, and they went in after them." Pharaoh's army drove right into the sea after Israel. Pride makes people reckless. They saw a path that God had made for His people, and they thought they could use it too.

"In the morning watch," the last hours before dawn, "the LORD looked down on the camp of Egypt in the pillar of fire and cloud, and He threw the camp of Egypt into confusion." The SLB says He "removed the wheels of its chariots," so that they drove "with heaviness." Chariots stuck in mud or with broken wheels are useless.

Then Egypt said what they should have said months before: "Let me flee from before Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." Moses had said, "The LORD will fight for you" (14:14). Now even Egypt said it. But it was too late.

**14:26-28** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may return on Egypt, on its chariots and on its horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned at the turning of morning to its enduring **flow**; and Egypt **was** fleeing to meet it; and the LORD shook off Egypt in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and they covered the chariots and the horsemen of all the army of Pharaoh that had gone in after them into the sea; not even one remained among them.*

"Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may return on Egypt." Moses did, and at daybreak the sea came back to its normal flow. The Egyptians were "fleeing to meet it," running straight into the returning water. "The LORD shook off Egypt in the midst of the sea."

"The waters returned, and they covered the chariots and the horsemen of all the army of Pharaoh." The army that had come to drag Israel back into slavery was gone. "Not even one remained among them."

This is a solemn end. The Egyptians who had thrown Hebrew baby boys into the water died in the water. God's judgment matched the sin. And yet, as with the plagues, God had given warning after

warning. Psalm 136:15 says He "shook off Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea," because His steadfast love endures forever. God's judgment on Egypt was an act of love for His people.

**14:29-30** *And the sons of Israel walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters **were** a wall for them on their right and on their left. And the LORD saved Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt, and Israel saw Egypt dead on the shore of the sea.*

"The sons of Israel walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea." Moses repeats it so we will not miss it. The same sea that was death to Egypt was a road of life for Israel.

"The LORD saved Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt." This is the great salvation event of the Old Testament. The prophets and psalmists looked back to it again and again (Psalm 106:9-11; Isaiah 51:10). When Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah on the mountain, Luke says they spoke of His departure, His exodus, which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Jesus' death and resurrection is the greater exodus, freeing His people from sin and death.

"And Israel saw Egypt dead on the shore of the sea." The enemy that had ruled them for generations was gone. Moses' word came true: they would never see these Egyptians again.

**14:31** *And Israel saw the great hand which the LORD had worked against Egypt, and the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in Moses His servant.*

"Israel saw the great hand which the LORD had worked against Egypt, and the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in Moses His servant." Fear of the LORD and faith in the LORD came together. They saw His power, and they trusted Him.

This is the high point of the first half of Exodus. Sadly, as we will see in the coming chapters, Israel's faith would soon waver again. Faith built on one great moment needs to be fed day by day.

Has God brought you through a Red Sea? Remember it. When the next trouble comes, and it will, look back at the shore and remember the great hand of the LORD. He has not changed.

## Chapter 14 Summary

God told Israel to turn back and camp by the sea, so that Pharaoh would think they were trapped. Pharaoh regretted letting Israel go and chased them with six hundred chariots and all his army. When Israel saw Egypt coming, they were terrified and accused Moses of bringing them out to die. Moses told them not to fear but to stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, because the LORD would fight for them. The angel of God and the pillar of cloud moved behind Israel, giving darkness to Egypt and light to Israel. Moses stretched out his hand, and the LORD split the sea with a strong east wind, and Israel crossed on dry ground between walls of water. The Egyptians followed, but the LORD threw them into confusion, and when Moses stretched out his hand again, the sea returned and drowned the whole army. Israel saw the LORD's great power, feared Him and believed in Him and in Moses.

## Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. Why did God lead Israel to camp by the sea? (14:1-4)

2. Why did Pharaoh change his mind and chase Israel? (14:5-7)

3. What did the people say to Moses when they saw Egypt coming? (14:11-12)

4. What three things did Moses tell the people to do? (14:13-14)

5. What did the pillar of cloud do during the night? (14:19-20)

6. How did God part the sea, and how did Israel cross? (14:21-22)

7. What did the Egyptians say when God threw them into confusion? (14:25)

8. How does Paul use the crossing of the sea in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, and how does Luke 9:31 connect Jesus' death with an exodus?

9. Israel went from bold faith to panic in one day. What helps you remember God's past faithfulness when you face a new fear?

10. "The LORD will fight for you, and you, you shall keep silent." Is there a battle you need to stop fighting in your own strength and hand over to God?

# Chapter 15: The Song of Moses

## Scripture

**15:1-18** Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and they said, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea. My strength and song ***is the*** LORD, and He has become salvation for me; this ***is*** my God, and I will praise Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him. The LORD ***is*** a man of war; the LORD ***is*** His name. The chariots of Pharaoh and his army He has cast into the sea; and the choicest of his officers have been sunk in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, ***is*** glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. And in the greatness of Your majesty You throw down those who rise up against You; You send forth Your burning anger; it consumes them like stubble. And by the breath of Your nostrils the waters were piled up; the streams stood up like a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the plunder; my soul shall be filled ***with*** them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall dispossess them.' You blew with Your breath; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in mighty waters. Who ***is*** like You among the gods, O LORD? Who ***is*** like You, glorious in holiness, awesome ***in*** praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided ***them*** by Your strength to the abode of Your holiness. Peoples have heard; they tremble; anguish has seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom are terrified; the mighty ones of Moab, trembling seizes them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they are still like the stone, until Your people pass over, O LORD, until the people whom You have bought pass over. You will bring them in and You will plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance, the place for Your dwelling ***which*** You have made, O LORD, the sanctuary, O Lord, ***which*** Your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever."

**15:19-27** For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, and the sons of Israel walked on the dry ground in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances. And Miriam sang to them, "Sing to the LORD, for He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea." And Moses led Israel out from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and they did not find water. And they came to Marah, and they were not able to drink the waters from Marah, for they ***were*** bitter; therefore one called its name Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw ***it*** into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for him a statute and a judgment, and there He tested him. And He said, "If you will surely listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what ***is*** right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, all the sickness which I put on Egypt I will not put on

you; for I ***am*** the LORD who heals you." And they came to Elim, and there ***were*** twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters.

## Chapter 15 Preview

Israel stands on the far shore of the sea, and the army of Egypt is gone. The first thing they do is sing. This is the first great song of praise recorded in the Bible, and it is all about the LORD: who He is, what He has done at the sea, and what He will do for His people in the future. Moses leads the people, and his sister Miriam leads the women with tambourines and dancing.

Then the singing stops and the journey begins. Three days into the wilderness, Israel finds no water, and when they come to Marah, the water is bitter. The people grumble. Moses cries out to the LORD, and God shows him a tree that makes the water sweet. God promises to be "the LORD who heals you," and He leads them on to Elim, a place of twelve springs and seventy palm trees.

## Chapter 15 Study

**15:1** *Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and they said, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea.*

"Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD." Notice who the song is sung to. It is not a song about Israel's courage, because they had none. It is a song to the LORD about what He did.

"He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea." Egypt's chariots were its pride. In one night the LORD threw them into the water. Praise is the right answer to salvation. When God saves us, the first thing we should do is thank Him.

This song is sung again at the end of the Bible. In Revelation 15:3, those who overcome the beast stand by a sea of glass and sing "the song of Moses the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb." The God who saved Israel at the sea will save His people at the end.

**15:2-3** *My strength and song **is the** LORD, and He has become salvation for me; this **is** my God, and I will praise Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him. The LORD **is** a man of war; the LORD **is** His name.*

"My strength and song is the LORD, and He has become salvation for me." The LORD is not only the One who gives strength. He is the strength. He is not only the reason for the song. He is the song. The same words are repeated in Psalm 118:14 and Isaiah 12:2.

"This is my God, and I will praise Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him." The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was now their God in a personal way. Faith that was handed down became faith they owned.

"The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name." That can sound strange to us. But Israel had no army that night. The LORD fought for them, just as Moses said He would (14:14). God is a

warrior against evil, and in the end Christ will come as a warrior to judge and make war in righteousness (Revelation 19:11).

**15:4-5** *The chariots of Pharaoh and his army He has cast into the sea; and the choicest of his officers have been sunk in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone.*

"The chariots of Pharaoh and his army He has cast into the sea; and the choicest of his officers have been sunk in the Red Sea." The best men of the greatest power on earth were gone.

"They went down into the depths like a stone." A stone does not float or struggle back up. It sinks and stays down. The picture is of a judgment that was quick and complete. Micah later used the same picture for God's mercy: He will throw all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). What God buries, He does not dig back up.

**15:6-8** *Your right hand, O LORD, **is** glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. And in the greatness of Your majesty You throw down those who rise up against You; You send forth Your burning anger; it consumes them like stubble. And by the breath of Your nostrils the waters were piled up; the streams stood up like a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.*

"Your right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power." In Scripture the right hand stands for strength and skill. Moses' staff was lifted, but it was God's hand that did the work.

"You send forth Your burning anger; it consumes them like stubble." Stubble is the dry stalk left in a field after harvest. It burns up in a moment. God's anger is not a bad temper. It is His holy and settled opposition to evil, and Egypt had stood against Him through ten plagues.

"By the breath of Your nostrils the waters were piled up." Chapter 14 told us a strong east wind divided the sea (14:21). Here the song tells us whose breath that wind was. "The deeps congealed in the heart of the sea." The water stood up as if it had turned solid, like a wall. What looks like nature is often God's hand at work.

**15:9-10** *The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the plunder; my soul shall be filled **with** them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall dispossess them.' You blew with Your breath; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in mighty waters.*

Now the song lets us hear the enemy's boast: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the plunder." Seven times the enemy says "I" or "my." Pharaoh's army was sure of itself. It planned the victory, counted the plunder, and drew the sword.

Then comes one line in answer: "You blew with Your breath; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in mighty waters." All the enemy's plans were undone with one breath of God. Proud men make big plans. God only needs to breathe. Psalm 2:4 says the One who sits in the heavens laughs at the plots of the nations.

**15:11-12** *Who **is** like You among the gods, O LORD? Who **is** like You, glorious in holiness, awesome **in** praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them.*

"Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, awesome in praises, doing wonders?" The plagues had been a judgment on the gods of Egypt (12:12). The Nile, the frogs, the sun and Pharaoh himself were all worshiped in Egypt, and none of them could stand against the LORD. The answer to the question is: no one.

Holiness means God is set apart, completely pure and different from all He has made. This is the first time the Bible calls God glorious in holiness. Everything that follows in Exodus, the mountain, the law and the tabernacle, will teach Israel what it means to live near a holy God.

"You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them." The sea is pictured here as part of the earth that swallowed Egypt's army.

**15:13** *You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided **them** by Your strength to the abode of Your holiness.*

Now the song turns from what God did to Egypt to what He does for Israel. "You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You have redeemed."

Two great words appear here. Steadfast love is the Hebrew word hesed: loyal, faithful love that keeps its promises. God was keeping His covenant with Abraham. Redeemed means bought back or set free by paying a price. God had told Moses He would redeem Israel "with an outstretched arm" (6:6). The price was paid in the blood of the Passover lambs.

"You have guided them by Your strength to the abode of Your holiness." God did not save Israel only to leave them in the desert. He was bringing them to Himself. In the same way, Peter says we were redeemed not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:18-19), and Christ suffered "that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

**15:14-16** *Peoples have heard; they tremble; anguish has seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom are terrified; the mighty ones of Moab, trembling seizes them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they are still like the stone, until Your people pass over, O LORD, until the people whom You have bought pass over.*

The song looks ahead. The news of the sea would travel. "Anguish has seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom are terrified; the mighty ones of Moab, trembling seizes them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away."

This came true. Forty years later Rahab told the spies in Jericho that their hearts had melted when they heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea (Joshua 2:9-11).

"Until the people whom You have bought pass over." Israel belonged to God because He had bought them. The New Testament says the same of believers: we are not our own, for we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

**15:17-18** *You will bring them in and You will plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance, the place for Your dwelling* ***which*** *You have made, O LORD, the sanctuary, O Lord,* ***which*** *Your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever."*

"You will bring them in and You will plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance." God would plant His people in the land like a tree, to put down roots and stay.

"The place for Your dwelling which You have made, O LORD, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established." A sanctuary is a holy place set apart for God. This points ahead to the tabernacle, then to Mount Zion and the temple in Jerusalem. God's goal was always to live among His people.

"The LORD shall reign forever and ever." The song ends with the LORD as King. Pharaoh claimed to be a god-king, and his reign was over. The LORD's reign has no end. One day the world will say it with Israel when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever (Revelation 11:15).

**15:19-21** *For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, and the sons of Israel walked on the dry ground in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances. And Miriam sang to them, "Sing to the LORD, for He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea."*

Verse 19 sums up the story in one sentence: Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters back on them, and "the sons of Israel walked on the dry ground in the midst of the sea."

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances." This is the first time Miriam is named. She is very likely the same sister who watched over baby Moses in the reeds (2:4-8). A prophet or prophetess is someone who speaks for God. Miriam led the women in worship with music and joy.

Her song repeats the first line of Moses' song: "Sing to the LORD, for He has surely risen up in majesty; the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea." Worship in Scripture is often loud and joyful when God has done great things. There is a time for quiet awe and a time for tambourines.

**15:22-24** *And Moses led Israel out from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and they did not find water. And they came to Marah, and they were not able to drink the waters from Marah, for they* ***were*** *bitter; therefore one called its name Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"*

"Moses led Israel out from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur." Shur lay east of Egypt, in the northwest of the Sinai Peninsula. "They went three days in the wilderness,

and they did not find water." Three days without water in the desert is a real danger, especially with children and animals.

Then they came to Marah and found water at last, but "they were not able to drink the waters from Marah, for they were bitter." Marah means bitter. Imagine the hope as they saw the water, and then the bitter taste.

"And the people grumbled against Moses," asking, "What shall we drink?" Three days earlier they were singing. Now they were complaining. The same people who sang about God's power doubted He could give them a drink. Grumbling is complaining that blames, and in Exodus it is really unbelief: it says God will not take care of us. It will come up again and again in the coming chapters.

**15:25-26** *And he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw **it** into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for him a statute and a judgment, and there He tested him. And He said, "If you will surely listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what **is** right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, all the sickness which I put on Egypt I will not put on you; for I **am** the LORD who heals you."*

"And he cried out to the LORD." Moses took the problem to the right place. The people grumbled at Moses. Moses prayed to God. When trouble comes, we can do one or the other.

"The LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet." Scripture does not say there was anything special in the wood. The healing came from God. Many Christians have seen in this a picture of the cross, the tree that turns the bitterness of life and death into something sweet (1 Peter 2:24 calls the cross a tree). The New Testament does not draw that link here, so I hold it only as a picture.

"There He made for him a statute and a judgment, and there He tested him." God was testing Israel to show what was in their hearts. Then He gave a promise with a condition: "If you will surely listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His eyes," and keep His commandments, "all the sickness which I put on Egypt I will not put on you; for I am the LORD who heals you."

God here gives Himself a new name, the LORD who heals. He healed the water, and He wanted to heal His people. This promise was part of His covenant with Israel, tied to their obedience. It is not a promise that a believer today will never be sick. But it shows us that God's heart is to heal, and one day He will wipe away every tear and there will be no more pain (Revelation 21:4).

**15:27** *And they came to Elim, and there **were** twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters.*

"And they came to Elim, and there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters." After the bitter water came a place of rest, shade and plenty.

God does not lead His people only through hard places. Marah was a test, but Elim was a gift. Twelve springs, one for each tribe, and seventy palm trees, perhaps one for each of the seventy

who went down to Egypt (1:5), though the text does not say so. Sometimes the place of refreshing is only a short walk past the place of bitterness. If you are at Marah today, keep walking with the LORD. He knows where Elim is.

## Chapter 15 Summary

After crossing the sea, Moses and the people of Israel sang to the LORD. They praised Him as their strength, their song and their salvation, a warrior who threw Pharaoh's chariots and army into the sea. They sang that no god is like the LORD, glorious in holiness. They praised His steadfast love in leading the people He had redeemed, and they looked ahead to the nations trembling and to God planting His people in His land and His sanctuary, where He would reign forever. Miriam the prophetess led the women with tambourines and dancing. Then Israel went three days into the wilderness without water and came to Marah, where the water was bitter. The people grumbled, Moses cried out to the LORD, and God showed him a tree that made the water sweet. God promised that if they listened to Him, He would not put on them the diseases of Egypt, for He is the LORD who heals. Then they came to Elim, with twelve springs and seventy palm trees.

## Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. To whom did Moses and Israel sing, and what was the main subject of their song? (15:1)

2. What three things does Moses call the LORD in verse 2? (15:2)

3. What did the enemy boast he would do, and how did God answer? (15:9-10)

4. What question does the song ask in verse 11, and what is the answer? (15:11)

5. What does "redeemed" mean, and how does 1 Peter 1:18-19 use the same idea? (15:13)

6. How did Rahab's words in Joshua 2:9-11 fulfill verses 14-16? (15:14-16)

7. What happened at Marah, and how did Moses respond differently from the people? (15:23-25)

8. What new name did God give Himself at Marah? (15:26)

9. Israel went from singing to grumbling in three days. What helps you keep praising God when the next hard thing comes?

10. Is there a "Marah" in your life right now? What would it look like to cry out to the LORD instead of grumbling?

# Chapter 16: Manna and Quail

## Scripture

**16:1-12** And they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which ***is*** between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month of their going out from the land of Egypt. And all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness. And the sons of Israel said to them, "Who will give ***that*** we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pot of the meat, when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to put this whole assembly to death with hunger." And the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I am about to rain bread from the heavens for you; and the people shall go out and gather the matter of a day in its day, so that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day, and they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be double over what they gather day ***by*** day." And Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "***At*** evening, then you shall know that the LORD brought you out from the land of Egypt; and ***in the*** morning, then you shall see the glory of the LORD, in that He has heard your grumblings against the LORD; and what ***are*** we, that you grumble against us?" And Moses said, "***This shall be*** when the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to be satisfied, in that the LORD has heard your grumblings which you are grumbling against Him. And what ***are*** we? Your grumblings ***are*** not against us, but against the LORD." And Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Draw near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" And it was, as Aaron spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they turned toward the wilderness, and look, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be satisfied ***with*** bread; and you shall know that I ***am*** the LORD your God.'"

**16:13-21** And it was in the evening, and the quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of the dew around the camp. And the layer of the dew went up, and look, on the face of the wilderness ***was*** a thin, flake-like ***thing***, thin like the frost on the ground. And the sons of Israel saw ***it***, and they said each man to his brother, "What ***is*** it?" for they did not know what it ***was***. And Moses said to them, "It ***is*** the bread which the LORD has given to you for food. This ***is*** the word which the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it each man according to his eating, approximately 2 quarts (an omer) per head, ***by*** the number of your souls; you shall take, each man, for those who ***are*** in his tent.'" And the sons of Israel did so, and they gathered, the one who ***gathered*** much and the one who ***gathered*** little. And they measured ***it*** with the omer, and the one who ***gathered*** much had no surplus, and the one who ***gathered*** little had no lack; each man had gathered according to his eating. And Moses said to them, "Let no man leave ***any*** of it until morning." And they did not listen to Moses, and men left of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank; and Moses was angry with them. And they gathered it in the morning, in the morning, each man according to his eating; and the sun became hot, and it melted.

**16:22-36** And it was on the sixth day, they gathered double bread, approximately 4 quarts (two omers) for the one; and all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said to

them, "It ***is*** what the LORD has spoken: 'Tomorrow ***is*** a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath of holiness to the LORD. What you will bake, bake, and what you will boil, boil; and all the surplus, leave for yourselves to be kept until the morning.'" And they left it until the morning, just as Moses had commanded; and it did not stink, and a maggot was not in it. And Moses said, "Eat it today, for today ***is*** a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, and on the seventh day ***is*** a Sabbath; it will not be in it." And it was on the seventh day, ***some*** of the people went out to gather, and they did not find ***it***. And the LORD said to Moses, "Until when do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He is giving you on the sixth day bread of two days. Stay each man in his place; let no man go out from his place on the seventh day." And the people rested on the seventh day. And the house of Israel called its name manna; and it ***was*** like coriander seed, white, and its taste ***was*** like a wafer with honey. And Moses said, "This ***is*** the word which the LORD has commanded: 'The fullness of the omer of it, approximately 2 quarts, ***is*** to be kept for your generations, so that they may see the bread which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.'" And Moses said to Aaron, "Take one jar, and put there the fullness of the omer ***of*** manna, and set it down before the LORD to be kept for your generations." Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, ***so*** Aaron set it down before the Testimony to be kept. And the sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. And the omer, it ***is*** a tenth of the ephah.

## Chapter 16 Preview

A month after leaving Egypt, Israel comes into the wilderness of Sin, and the food they brought with them is running out. The whole congregation grumbles against Moses and Aaron and says they would rather have died in Egypt beside the meat pots. God answers their complaint with grace. He sends quail in the evening, and in the morning He rains bread from heaven.

The people call the bread manna, which sounds like their question, "What is it?" God gives clear rules: gather enough for each day, do not keep it overnight, gather double on the sixth day, and rest on the seventh. Some disobey, and their manna rots. Here the Sabbath appears for the first time as a command to Israel. A jar of manna is kept as a reminder for later generations, and God feeds Israel this way for forty years. Jesus will later say that He is the true bread from heaven.

## Chapter 16 Study

**16:1-3** *And they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which **is** between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month of their going out from the land of Egypt. And all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness. And the sons of Israel said to them, "Who will give **that** we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pot of the meat, when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to put this whole assembly to death with hunger."*

"On the fifteenth day of the second month of their going out from the land of Egypt," Israel came to the wilderness of Sin. The name has nothing to do with the English word sin. It was a desert region between Elim and Mount Sinai. They had been traveling a month.

"And all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron." This time it was not a few people. It was everyone.

"Who will give that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pot of the meat, when we ate bread to the full!" Their memory had changed. They forgot the whips and the bricks and the drowned baby boys. They remembered only the meat pots. When we are unhappy with where God has us, we often remember our past slavery as better than it was.

"You have brought us out into this wilderness to put this whole assembly to death with hunger." They accused Moses of planning to kill them. Grumbling always assumes the worst about God and His servants.

**16:4-5** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I am about to rain bread from the heavens for you; and the people shall go out and gather the matter of a day in its day, so that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day, and they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be double over what they gather day **by** day."*

God did not answer their unbelief with judgment. He answered it with bread. "Look, I am about to rain bread from the heavens for you." Rain comes from God, without any work from us. That was the point. They could not earn it or grow it. They could only gather it.

"The people shall go out and gather the matter of a day in its day, so that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not." God gave enough for each day, no more. Every morning they would have to trust Him again. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Daily bread teaches daily trust.

On the sixth day they were to gather double. God already had the seventh day in mind.

**16:6-8** *And Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "**At** evening, then you shall know that the LORD brought you out from the land of Egypt; and **in the** morning, then you shall see the glory of the LORD, in that He has heard your grumblings against the LORD; and what **are** we, that you grumble against us?" And Moses said, "**This shall be** when the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to be satisfied, in that the LORD has heard your grumblings which you are grumbling against Him. And what **are** we? Your grumblings **are** not against us, but against the LORD."*

Moses and Aaron told the people that in the evening they would know "that the LORD brought you out from the land of Egypt," and in the morning they would "see the glory of the LORD." The meat and the bread would prove who had brought them out. It was not Moses' plan. It was the LORD's.

"What are we, that you grumble against us?" Moses said it plainly in verse 8: "Your grumblings are not against us, but against the LORD." When we complain against the leaders God has given, or against our circumstances, we are often really complaining against God. That is a sobering thought. Paul warned the church in Corinth not to grumble as some in Israel did (1 Corinthians 10:10).

**16:9-12** *And Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Draw near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" And it was, as Aaron spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they turned toward the wilderness, and look, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'Between the two evenings you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be satisfied **with** bread; and you shall know that I **am** the LORD your God.'"*

Aaron called the people to "draw near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings." As they looked toward the wilderness, "the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." The glory of the LORD is the shining, visible sign of His presence. They had grumbled, and God showed up.

The LORD told Moses He had heard. He promised meat "between the two evenings," meaning around twilight, and bread in the morning, "and you shall know that I am the LORD your God." God's gifts are not only for our bodies. They are meant to show us who He is.

**16:13-15** *And it was in the evening, and the quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of the dew around the camp. And the layer of the dew went up, and look, on the face of the wilderness **was** a thin, flake-like **thing**, thin like the frost on the ground. And the sons of Israel saw **it**, and they said each man to his brother, "What **is** it?" for they did not know what it **was**. And Moses said to them, "It **is** the bread which the LORD has given to you for food.*

"In the evening, and the quail came up and covered the camp." Quail are small birds. Large flocks of them still pass over the Sinai on their spring and autumn migrations, and tired birds land low where they are easy to catch. God used something natural, but He sent it at the exact time He promised.

In the morning, when the dew lifted, there was "a thin, flake-like thing, thin like the frost on the ground." The people had never seen anything like it. They "said each man to his brother," "What is it?" In Hebrew that question is man hu, and that is where the name manna comes from (16:31).

"It is the bread which the LORD has given to you for food." Moses did not explain how it formed. Some have tried to explain manna as a natural substance found in the desert, such as the sweet drops some insects leave on tamarisk trees. But that comes only in small amounts for a few weeks a year. Manna came six days a week for forty years, fed a whole nation, doubled on the sixth day, and stopped on the seventh. This was a miracle.

**16:16-18** *This **is** the word which the LORD has commanded: 'Gather of it each man according to his eating, approximately 2 quarts (an omer) per head, **by** the number of your souls; you shall take, each man, for those who **are** in his tent.'" And the sons of Israel did so, and they gathered, the one who **gathered** much and the one who **gathered** little. And they measured **it** with the omer, and the one who **gathered** much had no surplus, and the one who **gathered** little had no lack; each man had gathered according to his eating.*

Each man was to gather "approximately 2 quarts (an omer) per head," enough for each person in his tent. An omer is an old dry measure, about two quarts.

"The one who gathered much had no surplus, and the one who gathered little had no lack." Some gathered more and some less, but when it was measured out, everyone had exactly what they needed. God's provision was fair and enough.

Paul quotes verse 18 in 2 Corinthians 8:15. He uses it to teach the church to share, so that those with more help those with less. What God gives us is not only for us. When we share, God's people have what they need.

**16:19-21** *And Moses said to them, "Let no man leave **any** of it until morning." And they did not listen to Moses, and men left of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank; and Moses was angry with them. And they gathered it in the morning, in the morning, each man according to his eating; and the sun became hot, and it melted.*

"Let no man leave any of it until morning." Simple. But "they did not listen to Moses," and some kept it overnight. "It bred worms and stank." Their stored manna was the proof of their unbelief. They did not trust that God would send more tomorrow.

"And Moses was angry with them." Disobedience to God's clear word is serious.

"They gathered it in the morning, in the morning." The repeated word shows the daily habit. When the sun became hot, what was left on the ground melted. If they wanted bread, they had to get up and gather it early. There is a lesson there for us. The time to seek God is early, before the heat of the day takes over.

**16:22-26** *And it was on the sixth day, they gathered double bread, approximately 4 quarts (two omers) for the one; and all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said to them, "It **is** what the LORD has spoken: 'Tomorrow **is** a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath of holiness to the LORD. What you will bake, bake, and what you will boil, boil; and all the surplus, leave for yourselves to be kept until the morning.'" And they left it until the morning, just as Moses had commanded; and it did not stink, and a maggot was not in it. And Moses said, "Eat it today, for today **is** a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, and on the seventh day **is** a Sabbath; it will not be in it."*

On the sixth day they gathered double, "approximately 4 quarts (two omers)" per person. The leaders came to Moses, surprised. Moses explained: "Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath of holiness to the LORD."

This is the first time the word Sabbath appears in the Bible. It comes from the Hebrew word for stop or rest. God rested on the seventh day after creation (Genesis 2:2-3), but here, before Mount Sinai, God gives the seventh day to Israel as a day of rest. They were to bake and boil ahead of time.

This time the manna kept overnight "and it did not stink, and a maggot was not in it." The same manna that rotted on other days stayed fresh on the Sabbath. God was teaching Israel that rest is His gift. "Today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field." Six days of gathering, one day of rest.

**16:27-30** *And it was on the seventh day, **some** of the people went out to gather, and they did not find **it**. And the LORD said to Moses, "Until when do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He is giving you on the sixth day bread of two days. Stay each man in his place; let no man go out from his place on the seventh day." And the people rested on the seventh day.*

"On the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, and they did not find it." Some always test the rules to see if God means what He says.

"Until when do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?" God speaks to all of Israel here, not only those few. Disobedience by some shows the heart of the people.

"See, for the LORD has given you the Sabbath." Notice the word given. The Sabbath was a gift, not a burden. Slaves in Egypt never had a day off. Now Israel's God gave them one every week. "And the people rested on the seventh day."

Hebrews 4:9-10 says there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, and whoever enters God's rest rests from his own works. The weekly rest was a picture of the deeper rest we find when we stop trying to earn God's favor and trust Christ.

**16:31** *And the house of Israel called its name manna; and it **was** like coriander seed, white, and its taste **was** like a wafer with honey.*

"The house of Israel called its name manna; and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like a wafer with honey." Coriander seeds are small, round and pale. The taste was sweet. God did not only give them enough. He gave them something good.

Psalm 78:24-25 calls manna "the grain of heaven" and says each man "ate the bread of mighty ones," which many take to mean the bread of angels. God feeds His people well.

**16:32-36** *And Moses said, "This **is** the word which the LORD has commanded: 'The fullness of the omer of it, approximately 2 quarts, **is** to be kept for your generations, so that they may see the bread which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.'" And Moses said to Aaron, "Take one jar, and put there the fullness of the omer **of** manna, and set it down before the LORD to be kept for your generations." Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, **so** Aaron set it down before the Testimony to be kept. And the sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. And the omer, it **is** a tenth of the ephah.*

God told Moses to keep an omer of manna "for your generations, so that they may see the bread which I fed you in the wilderness." Aaron put it in a jar and set it "before the Testimony to be kept." The Testimony means the tablets of the law that would later be kept in the ark of the covenant (25:16). Moses is writing after those things were made. Hebrews 9:4 says the golden jar of manna was kept in the ark.

"The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land." Joshua 5:12 tells us the manna stopped the day after they ate the produce of Canaan. For forty years, every morning but the Sabbath, God fed them. Even in the years they were wandering because of their unbelief, He did not stop. Verse 36 explains the omer for later readers: it is a tenth of an ephah.

Jesus pointed to this chapter when He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). He told the crowd that Moses did not give them the bread from heaven, but His Father gives the true bread from heaven, which gives life to the world (John 6:32-33). The manna kept Israel alive for a day. Jesus gives life that lasts forever. Those who ate manna still died (John 6:49), but whoever eats the bread that came down from heaven, by believing in Him, will live forever (John 6:50-51). Have you come to Him for that bread?

## Chapter 16 Summary

A month after leaving Egypt, Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, and the whole congregation grumbled against Moses and Aaron, wishing they had died in Egypt by the meat pots. The LORD promised to rain bread from heaven, enough for each day, with a double portion on the sixth day. Moses told the people that their grumbling was really against the LORD. The glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. In the evening quail covered the camp, and in the morning a thin flake-like bread lay on the ground. The people called it manna. Each person gathered an omer, and no one had too much or too little. Some kept it overnight against Moses' word, and it rotted. On the sixth

day they gathered double, and the extra did not spoil on the seventh day, the Sabbath of rest the LORD gave them. Some went out on the Sabbath and found nothing. A jar of manna was kept before the Testimony for future generations. Israel ate manna for forty years, until they reached Canaan.

There are many things in my old life that I am tempted to remember as better than they were. The grass is never greener, even in our memories. We forget what it was really like. When I am tempted to look back, I try to remember the whole truth, not the highlight reel.

## Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. What did the people say they missed about Egypt? (16:3)

2. Why did God give only enough manna for each day? (16:4)

3. Against whom did Moses say the people were really grumbling? (16:8)

4. How did the name manna come about? (16:15, 31)

5. What happened to the manna that people kept overnight, and what happened to the manna kept for the Sabbath? (16:20, 24)

6. Why does Moses say God "has given" the Sabbath to Israel? (16:29)

7. Why was a jar of manna kept, and where was it placed? (16:32-34)

8. How does Jesus use the manna in John 6:32-35 and 6:49-51?

9. Israel remembered Egypt as better than it was. Is there something in your old life you are tempted to remember that way?

10. What would it look like in your life this week to trust God for daily bread, one day at a time?

# Chapter 17: Water From the Rock

## Scripture

**17:1-7** And all the congregation of the sons of Israel set out from the wilderness of Sin by their stages, at the mouth of the LORD, and they encamped at Rephidim; and ***there*** was no water for the people to drink. And the people quarreled with Moses, and they said, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses, and they said, "Why then have you brought us up from Egypt, to put me and my children and my livestock to death with thirst?" And Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do for this people? Yet a little, and they will stone me." And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, and take with you ***some*** of the elders of Israel; and your staff, with which you struck the Nile, take in your hand, and go. Look, I am standing before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out from it, and the people shall drink." And Moses did so in the eyes of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?"

**17:8-16** And Amalek came, and he fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will be standing on the top of the hill, and the staff of God ***will be*** in my hand." And Joshua did just as Moses had said to him, to fight against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up ***to*** the top of the hill. And it was, when Moses lifted up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand rest, Amalek prevailed. And the hands of Moses ***were*** heavy; and they took a stone and put ***it*** under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this ***side*** and one on that ***side***; and his hands were steady until the sun went ***down***. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people by the mouth of the sword. And the LORD said to Moses, "Write this ***as*** a memorial in the book, and put ***it*** in the ears of Joshua, for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens." And Moses built an altar, and he called its name "The LORD ***Is*** My Banner." And he said, "For a hand ***is*** on the throne of ***the*** LORD: war ***belongs*** to the LORD with Amalek from generation ***to*** generation."

## Chapter 17 Preview

Israel camps at Rephidim, and once again there is no water. This time the people do more than grumble. They quarrel with Moses and are close to stoning him. God tells Moses to take his staff, go ahead of the people with the elders, and strike the rock at Horeb, where God Himself will stand before him. Water pours out of the rock. Moses names the place Massah and Meribah, testing and quarreling, because Israel asked, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?" Paul tells us that the rock was Christ.

Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads Israel's fighting men in the valley while Moses stands on a hill with the staff of God raised. When Moses' hands are up, Israel wins. When they drop, Amalek

wins. Aaron and Hur hold up his hands until sunset, and Israel wins the battle. Moses builds an altar and calls it "The LORD Is My Banner."

## Chapter 17 Study

**17:1** *And all the congregation of the sons of Israel set out from the wilderness of Sin by their stages, at the mouth of the LORD, and they encamped at Rephidim; and **there** was no water for the people to drink.*

"All the congregation of the sons of Israel set out from the wilderness of Sin by their stages, at the mouth of the LORD." At the mouth of the LORD means at His command. The pillar of cloud led them, and they followed. They were exactly where God wanted them.

"They encamped at Rephidim; and there was no water for the people to drink." God led them to a place with no water. Being in God's will does not mean having no problems. Sometimes God leads us into a dry place on purpose, to test us and to show us His power.

**17:2-3** *And the people quarreled with Moses, and they said, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses, and they said, "Why then have you brought us up from Egypt, to put me and my children and my livestock to death with thirst?"*

"And the people quarreled with Moses." The Hebrew word for quarrel here is the root of the name Meribah. It means to bring a legal complaint, to argue a case against someone. They put Moses, and really God, on trial. "Give us water, that we may drink."

Moses answered, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" To test the LORD is to demand that He prove Himself, as if He had not already done so many times. They had seen the plagues, the sea, the sweet water at Marah and manna every morning. Still they doubted.

"Why then have you brought us up from Egypt, to put me and my children and my livestock to death with thirst?" It is the same old complaint. Unbelief has a short memory. Thirst is real and hard, but the way they spoke showed they did not trust God at all.

**17:4-6** *And Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do for this people? Yet a little, and they will stone me." And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, and take with you **some** of the elders of Israel; and your staff, with which you struck the Nile, take in your hand, and go. Look, I am standing before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out from it, and the people shall drink." And Moses did so in the eyes of the elders of Israel.*

"And Moses cried out to the LORD," and he asked, "What shall I do for this people? Yet a little, and they will stone me." Leaders carry heavy loads. Moses was afraid for his life. He did the right thing: he took the problem to God.

God told Moses to go ahead of the people, take some of the elders as witnesses, and take "your staff, with which you struck the Nile." The staff that brought judgment on Egypt would now bring life to Israel.

"Look, I am standing before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out from it, and the people shall drink." Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, or the mountain range around it. God Himself stood on the rock. Moses struck it, and water came out, enough for the whole nation and their animals. Psalm 78:15-16 says God split rocks in the wilderness and made streams come out of the rock like rivers.

The New Testament tells us what this rock pictured. Paul writes that Israel "all drank the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Christ was with Israel in the wilderness, giving them life. And the rock was struck so that the people could drink. Christ was struck for us on the cross so that living water could flow to all who believe. Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37).

Later, in Numbers 20, God told Moses only to speak to the rock, but Moses struck it twice in anger, and for that he was not allowed to enter the land. Many teachers see a reason in the picture: Christ was struck once for all, and need not be struck again (Hebrews 9:28).

**17:7** *And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?"*

"He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah." Massah means testing. Meribah means quarreling. The names were a lasting reminder of Israel's sin.

The name was given "because they tested the LORD," asking, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?" That was the real question behind their complaint. The pillar of cloud was right there. The manna fell every morning. And still they asked if God was with them.

Psalm 95:7-11 warns, "Today, if you will listen to His voice, do not harden your heart" as at Meribah and Massah. Hebrews 3:7-19 quotes that psalm and applies it to us. When things are hard, we too can doubt whether God is really with us. Jesus promised, "I am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The answer to Israel's question is yes, and it is yes for us.

**17:8-10** *And Amalek came, and he fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will be standing on the top of the hill, and the staff of God* ***will be*** *in my hand." And Joshua did just as Moses had said to him, to fight against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up* ***to*** *the top of the hill.*

"And Amalek came, and he fought with Israel at Rephidim." The Amalekites were a desert people descended from Esau's grandson Amalek (Genesis 36:12). Deuteronomy 25:17-18 tells us how they attacked: they struck from behind, picking off the weak and tired who lagged at the back. It was a cowardly attack, and they "did not fear God."

Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek." This is the first time Joshua is named in the Bible. He would serve Moses for forty years and then lead Israel into the land. His name means the LORD saves, and it is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus.

Moses would stand "on the top of the hill, and the staff of God will be in my hand." Moses, Aaron and Hur went up. Hur appears again in 24:14 as a leader in the camp. Joshua fought in the valley. Moses prayed on the hill. Both were needed.

**17:11-13** *And it was, when Moses lifted up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand rest, Amalek prevailed. And the hands of Moses **were** heavy; and they took a stone and put **it** under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this **side** and one on that **side**; and his hands were steady until the sun went **down**. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people by the mouth of the sword.*

"When Moses lifted up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand rest, Amalek prevailed." The battle was not won by Joshua's swords alone. It was won as Moses held up the staff of God toward heaven. Raised hands in Scripture often go with prayer (1 Timothy 2:8). The lesson is clear. Victory comes from the LORD, and God's people depend on Him.

"And the hands of Moses were heavy." Moses was eighty years old and he was tired. Even a great man of God cannot hold up his arms all day. So Aaron and Hur put a stone under him, "and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side; and his hands were steady until the sun went down."

This is a beautiful picture of the body of Christ. No one serves God alone. Leaders need people who will hold up their hands. Is there a pastor, a teacher, a missionary, or a tired friend whose hands you could hold up in prayer this week?

"And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people by the mouth of the sword." The mouth of the sword means its sharp edge.

**17:14** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Write this **as** a memorial in the book, and put **it** in the ears of Joshua, for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens."*

"Write this as a memorial in the book." This is the first time in Scripture that God tells Moses to write something down. It shows that Moses kept a written record, which fits the long belief that Moses wrote the books of the Law.

"Put it in the ears of Joshua, for I will surely wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens." Joshua needed to remember this, because he would lead Israel after Moses. God passed judgment on Amalek for attacking His people when they were weak. That judgment came over many years, in the days of Saul (1 Samuel 15) and David (1 Samuel 30), and the last of them were struck down in the days of Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:43). God keeps His word, even when it takes centuries.

**17:15-16** *And Moses built an altar, and he called its name "The LORD **Is** My Banner." And he said, "For a hand **is** on the throne of **the** LORD: war **belongs** to the LORD with Amalek from generation **to** generation."*

"Moses built an altar," and he named it "The LORD Is My Banner." A banner was a flag or pole raised over an army, a rallying point for the troops. Israel's banner was not a flag. It was the LORD Himself. The staff lifted on the hill pointed to Him.

"For a hand is on the throne of the LORD: war belongs to the LORD with Amalek from generation to generation." The meaning of the first part is hard in Hebrew, but the point is plain: the LORD Himself had sworn to fight against Amalek.

Christians face battles too, not with flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12). We win them the same way Israel did: by lifting our eyes to the LORD, praying, and standing together. Isaiah 11:10 says that the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. Jesus Christ is our banner. We rally to Him.

## Chapter 17 Summary

Israel moved on at the LORD's command and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water. The people quarreled with Moses and tested the LORD, and Moses feared they would stone him. God told Moses to take the elders and his staff and strike the rock at Horeb, where the LORD stood before him. Water came out, and the people drank. Moses named the place Massah and Meribah because Israel had tested the LORD by asking whether He was among them. Paul says the rock was Christ. Then Amalek attacked. Joshua led the fighting men while Moses held up the staff of God on a hill. When Moses' hands were raised, Israel won; when they fell, Amalek won. Aaron and Hur held up his hands until sunset, and Joshua defeated Amalek. God told Moses to write the event in a book and promised to blot out the memory of Amalek. Moses built an altar named "The LORD Is My Banner."

## Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. Who led Israel to Rephidim, where there was no water? (17:1)

2. What does it mean to "test the LORD," and how did Israel do it? (17:2, 7)

3. Where did God stand when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)

4. According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, who was the rock? How does that help you understand this story?

5. What question showed the real heart of Israel's complaint? (17:7)

6. How did Amalek attack Israel, according to Deuteronomy 25:17-18?

7. What happened when Moses raised his hands, and when he lowered them? (17:11)

8. What did Aaron and Hur do, and why was it needed? (17:12)

9. When have you asked, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?" What helps you remember that He is?

10. Whose hands could you help hold up this week, and how?

# Chapter 18: Jethro's Counsel

## Scripture

**18:1-12** And Jethro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, that the LORD had brought Israel out from Egypt. And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took Zipporah, the wife of Moses, after her sending away, and her two sons, of whom the name of the one ***was*** Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"; and the name of the one ***was*** Eliezer, "for the God of my father ***was*** my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came, and his sons and his wife, to Moses, into the wilderness where he was encamped, ***at*** the mountain of God. And he said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, and your wife and her two sons with her." And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each man of his neighbor about ***his*** peace; and they went into the tent. And Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt on account of Israel, all the hardship that had found them on the way, and ***how*** the LORD had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced over all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had delivered from the hand of Egypt. And Jethro said, "Blessed ***be*** the LORD, who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from under the hand of Egypt. Now I know that the LORD ***is*** greater than all the gods; for in the matter in which they acted presumptuously, ***He was*** over them." And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moses before God.

**18:13-27** And it was on the next day, and Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening. And the father-in-law of Moses saw all that he was doing for the people, and he said, "What ***is*** this thing that you are doing for the people? Why ***are*** you sitting by yourself alone, and all the people standing by you from morning until evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a matter, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." And the father-in-law of Moses said to him, "The thing that you are doing ***is*** not good. You will surely wear out, both you and this people that ***is*** with you; for the thing ***is too*** heavy for you; you are not able to do it by yourself alone. Now listen to my voice; I will advise you, and may God be with you. You be for the people before God, and you bring the matters to God; and you shall warn them ***about*** the statutes and the laws, and you shall make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do. And you, you shall look out from all the people men of ability, fearing God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and you shall set ***these*** over them ***as*** officials of thousands, officials of hundreds, officials of fifties, and officials of tens. And let them judge the people at every time; and it shall be ***that*** every great matter they shall bring to you, and every small matter they shall judge themselves; and lighten ***the load*** from on you, and they shall bear ***it*** with you. If you do this thing, and God commands you, then you will be able to stand, and also all this people shall go to its place in peace." And Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and he did all that he had said. And Moses chose men of ability from all Israel, and he made them heads over the people, officials of thousands, officials of hundreds,

officials of fifties, and officials of tens. And they judged the people at every time; the difficult matter they brought to Moses, and every small matter they judged themselves. And Moses sent off his father-in-law, and he went his way to his land.

## Chapter 18 Preview

Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, hears all that God has done for Israel. He comes to meet Moses at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' wife Zipporah and their two sons. Moses tells him the whole story of the exodus. Jethro rejoices, praises the LORD, says that the LORD is greater than all the gods, and offers sacrifices. Aaron and the elders eat a meal with him before God.

The next day Jethro watches Moses judge the people from morning to evening. He sees that it is too much for one man. He gives wise counsel: Moses should teach the people God's laws and choose able, God-fearing, honest men to judge the smaller cases, bringing only the hard cases to Moses. Moses listens and does it. It is a lesson in humility, in sharing the work, and in the kind of people who should lead.

## Chapter 18 Study

**18:1-4** *And Jethro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, that the LORD had brought Israel out from Egypt. And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took Zipporah, the wife of Moses, after her sending away, and her two sons, of whom the name of the one* ***was*** *Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"; and the name of the one* ***was*** *Eliezer, "for the God of my father* ***was*** *my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."*

"Jethro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people." News of the exodus traveled fast. Jethro had taken Moses in forty years earlier, when he fled from Egypt (2:15-22).

Jethro brought "Zipporah, the wife of Moses, after her sending away." At some point Moses had sent his wife and sons back to Jethro, perhaps after the trouble on the road in 4:24-26, or to keep them safe during the plagues. Scripture doesn't tell us why.

The names of Moses' two sons tell his story. Gershom sounds like the Hebrew for a sojourner there, because Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." A sojourner is a foreigner living in a land not his own. Eliezer means my God is help, "for the God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." The first name speaks of loss and exile. The second speaks of God's help. That is the story of many believers' lives.

**18:5-8** *And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came, and his sons and his wife, to Moses, into the wilderness where he was encamped, **at** the mountain of God. And he said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, and your wife and her two sons with her." And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each man of his neighbor about **his** peace; and they went into the tent. And Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt on account of Israel, all the hardship that had found them on the way, and **how** the LORD had delivered them.*

Jethro came "into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the mountain of God." This is Mount Sinai, where God first called Moses from the burning bush (3:1). Israel would reach the foot of the mountain in chapter 19. The writer may be telling this visit a little out of time order to keep the story of Jethro together.

"Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him." Moses was now the leader of a great nation, but he honored his father-in-law with deep respect. Greatness does not cancel honor and humility.

"Moses recounted to his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt on account of Israel, all the hardship that had found them on the way." He told the whole story, the hard parts and the victories, "and how the LORD had delivered them." Notice what Moses talked about: not himself, but the LORD. When we tell others our story, the hero should be God.

**18:9-12** *And Jethro rejoiced over all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had delivered from the hand of Egypt. And Jethro said, "Blessed **be** the LORD, who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from under the hand of Egypt. Now I know that the LORD **is** greater than all the gods; for in the matter in which they acted presumptuously, **He was** over them." And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moses before God.*

"Jethro rejoiced over all the good which the LORD had done for Israel." He did not just hear the news. He was glad for them.

"Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh." Then he said, "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods." This was the purpose of the plagues: that the world would know who the LORD is. Jethro was a priest of Midian, a man outside of Israel, and he came to know that the LORD is above every god. The SLB's next words are short and hard in the Hebrew, but the sense is that God proved greater in the very thing the Egyptians acted proudly about.

"Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God." A burnt offering was an animal wholly burned on the altar as a gift to God, a sign that the worshiper gave himself fully to Him. Then "Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moses before God." A shared meal was a sign of fellowship and peace.

Jethro is a reminder that God has always meant for people from every nation to know Him. God told Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Jethro was a foretaste of that, and so are we.

**18:13-16** *And it was on the next day, and Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening. And the father-in-law of Moses saw all that he was doing for the people, and he said, "What **is** this thing that you are doing for the people? Why **are** you sitting by yourself alone, and all the people standing by you from morning until evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a matter, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."*

"On the next day, and Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening." Every dispute in a nation of two million people came to one man. The line must have been endless.

Jethro asked, "Why are you sitting by yourself alone, and all the people standing by you from morning until evening?"

Moses explained, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God." When people had a dispute, Moses judged between them and made known "the statutes of God and His laws." Moses was doing a good thing. He was helping people find God's will. But a good thing can be done in the wrong way.

**18:17-18** *And the father-in-law of Moses said to him, "The thing that you are doing **is** not good. You will surely wear out, both you and this people that **is** with you; for the thing **is too** heavy for you; you are not able to do it by yourself alone.*

"The thing that you are doing is not good." Jethro was honest. He did not flatter his famous son-in-law. A true friend tells us the truth.

"You will surely wear out, both you and this people that is with you; for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to do it by yourself alone." Moses would burn out, and the people would wear out from waiting.

Many people in ministry today are where Moses was. They try to do everything themselves. They may think it is faithfulness, but it can be pride, or fear of letting go. God never meant one person to carry the whole load.

**18:19-20** *Now listen to my voice; I will advise you, and may God be with you. You be for the people before God, and you bring the matters to God; and you shall warn them **about** the statutes and the laws, and you shall make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do.*

"Now listen to my voice; I will advise you, and may God be with you." Jethro gave his counsel humbly, and he wanted it tested before God (18:23).

First, Moses was to keep the most important work: "You be for the people before God, and you bring the matters to God." He was to stand between God and the people in prayer. Second, he was to teach: "You shall make known to them the way in which they must walk and the work that they must do." If the people knew God's laws, many problems would be settled before they ever reached a judge.

The apostles made a similar choice in Acts 6:2-4. They asked the church to choose men to oversee the daily serving of food so that they could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

**18:21-23** *And you, you shall look out from all the people men of ability, fearing God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and you shall set **these** over them **as** officials of thousands, officials of hundreds, officials of fifties, and officials of tens. And let them judge the people at every time; and it shall be **that** every great matter they shall bring to you, and every small matter they shall judge themselves; and lighten **the load** from on you, and they shall bear **it** with you. If you do this thing, and God commands you, then you will be able to stand, and also all this people shall go to its place in peace."*

Third, Moses was to choose helpers. Look at the qualities Jethro named: "men of ability, fearing God, men of truth, hating unjust gain." These men had to be capable. They had to fear God, which means they took Him seriously and would answer to Him. They had to be honest. And they had to hate bribes and dishonest money.

Those are still the right qualities for leaders in the church, in government and in business. Paul's lists for elders and deacons sound much the same (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Skill without character is dangerous.

They would be "officials of thousands, officials of hundreds, officials of fifties, and officials of tens." Every small case would be judged close to home. "Every great matter they shall bring to you." Moses would handle the hard cases.

"If you do this thing, and God commands you, then you will be able to stand." Jethro was wise enough to say: check this with God.

**18:24-27** *And Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and he did all that he had said. And Moses chose men of ability from all Israel, and he made them heads over the people, officials of thousands, officials of hundreds, officials of fifties, and officials of tens. And they judged the people at every time; the difficult matter they brought to Moses, and every small matter they judged themselves. And Moses sent off his father-in-law, and he went his way to his land.*

"Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and he did all that he had said." Moses was humble enough to take advice. Numbers 12:3 says Moses was very humble, more than any man on the earth. Here we see it. He was the man God spoke to face to face, yet he listened to an older man from Midian.

Moses chose able men and made them heads over the people. "The difficult matter they brought to Moses, and every small matter they judged themselves." The system worked.

Deuteronomy 1:9-18 tells more of this, and adds that Moses had the tribes choose wise and respected men.

"And Moses sent off his father-in-law, and he went his way to his land." Jethro went home. But his wise counsel shaped Israel for generations.

Are you carrying something alone that God meant to be shared? Is there someone whose wise counsel you need to hear? Proverbs 11:14 says "victory is in a multitude of counselors."

## Chapter 18 Summary

Jethro, priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, heard what God had done for Israel and came to Moses at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' wife Zipporah and his sons Gershom and Eliezer. Moses greeted him with honor and told him all that the LORD had done. Jethro rejoiced, blessed the LORD, and said that now he knew the LORD was greater than all gods. He offered a burnt offering and sacrifices, and Aaron and the elders ate with him before God. The next day Jethro saw Moses judging the people alone from morning to evening and told him it was too heavy a load. He advised Moses to stand before God for the people, teach them God's laws, and appoint able, God-fearing, honest men who hated bribes as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, to judge the small cases and bring the hard ones to Moses. Moses listened and did all that Jethro said, and Jethro went home.

## Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. What do the names of Moses' two sons mean, and what do they say about his life? (18:3-4)

2. What did Moses talk about when he met Jethro? (18:8)

3. What did Jethro come to know after hearing Moses' report? (18:11)

4. Why did Jethro say that what Moses was doing was "not good"? (18:17-18)

5. What three parts did Jethro's plan have? (18:19-22)

6. What four qualities were the new leaders to have? (18:21)

7. How does Acts 6:2-4 show the same wisdom Jethro gave Moses?

8. What does Moses' response to Jethro show about his character? (18:24)

9. Are you trying to carry a load alone that God means to be shared? What could you hand to others?

10. Who are the wise counselors in your life, and how well do you listen when they tell you something hard?

# Chapter 19: Israel at Mount Sinai

## Scripture

**19:1-15** In the third month of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day, they came ***to*** the wilderness of Sinai. And they set out from Rephidim, and they came ***to*** the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness; and Israel encamped there before the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Myself. And now, if you will surely listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be to Me a treasured possession out of all the peoples; for all the earth ***belongs*** to Me. And you, you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These ***are*** the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel." And Moses came, and he called for the elders of the people, and he set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together, and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you, and also may believe in you forever." And Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down in the eyes of all the people on Mount Sinai. And you shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves ***against*** going up on the mountain and touching its edge; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. A hand shall not touch him, for he shall surely be stoned or surely be shot; whether animal or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn draws out ***its sound***, they shall go up on the mountain." And Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and he sanctified the people, and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, "Be ready for three days; do not draw near to a woman."

**19:16-25** And it was on the third day, when it was morning, and ***there*** were thunders and lightnings and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a ram's horn very strong; and all the people who ***were*** in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out from the camp to meet God, and they stood at the lower part of the mountain. And Mount Sinai smoked, all of it, because the LORD had come down on it in the fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of the furnace, and the whole mountain trembled exceedingly. And the sound of the ram's horn was going on and growing very strong; Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice. And the LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to see, and many of them fall. And also let the priests who draw near to the LORD sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." And Moses said to the LORD, "The people are not able to go up to Mount Sinai, for You, You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds for the mountain, and sanctify it.'" And the LORD said to him, "Go, go down, and you shall come up, you and Aaron with you; and let not the priests and the people break through to

come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them." And Moses went down to the people, and he spoke to them.

## Chapter 19 Preview

Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel arrives at Mount Sinai and camps at the foot of the mountain. They will stay there for almost a year, and the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus and the first part of Numbers take place here. God calls Moses up the mountain and offers Israel a covenant. He reminds them that He carried them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself. If they will obey His voice and keep His covenant, they will be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The people answer, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

Then God tells Moses to prepare the people for three days, because He will come down on the mountain in their sight. Limits are set around the mountain, and no one may touch it. On the third day there is thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, fire, smoke, an earthquake and the long blast of a ram's horn. The people tremble. This chapter shows how holy God is, and it prepares us for the giving of the Ten Commandments.

## Chapter 19 Study

**19:1-2** *In the third month of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day, they came **to** the wilderness of Sinai. And they set out from Rephidim, and they came **to** the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness; and Israel encamped there before the mountain.*

"In the third month of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, on this day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai." Israel left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month. Now, about seven weeks later, they reached Sinai.

"Israel encamped there before the mountain." God had told Moses at the burning bush, "When you bring out the people from Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain" (3:12). Now that promise came true. Moses stood where he had stood at the bush, this time with the whole nation.

Mount Sinai is traditionally placed at Jebel Musa in the south of the Sinai Peninsula, though other sites have been suggested. What matters is what happened there.

**19:3-4** *And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Myself.*

"Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain." God gave Moses a message for "the house of Jacob" and "the sons of Israel."

"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt." God starts with what He has already done. They were eyewitnesses.

"And I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Myself." What a picture. Deuteronomy 32:11 uses it again, of an eagle that spreads its wings and carries its young. God did not only bring Israel out of Egypt. He brought them to Himself. Salvation is not only rescue from something. It is rescue for Someone.

Notice the order. God saved Israel first, and only then gave them His law. The law was not the way to be saved. It was the way for a saved people to live. It is the same for us. God saves us by grace through faith, and then He teaches us to walk in His ways (Ephesians 2:8-10).

**19:5-6** *And now, if you will surely listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be to Me a treasured possession out of all the peoples; for all the earth **belongs** to Me. And you, you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These **are** the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel."*

"And now, if you will surely listen to My voice and keep My covenant." A covenant is a solemn, binding agreement that sets up a relationship, with promises and duties. God had made an unconditional covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15). Now He offered Israel a covenant at Sinai, often called the Mosaic covenant or the old covenant, with blessings tied to obedience.

God made three promises. First, "you shall be to Me a treasured possession out of all the peoples." A treasured possession is a king's private treasure, his most valued property. "For all the earth belongs to Me." God owns everything, but He chose Israel as His special people.

Second, "a kingdom of priests." A priest stands between God and people. Israel was to show the nations what God is like and bring them to Him.

Third, "a holy nation." Holy means set apart for God. Israel was to be different from the nations around them.

Peter uses this same language for believers in Christ: "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession" (1 Peter 2:9). This does not mean the church has replaced Israel. God gave these words first to Israel, and He has not cancelled His promises to them (Romans 11:29). In Christ, believers from every nation share in the same calling to belong to God and make Him known.

**19:7-9** *And Moses came, and he called for the elders of the people, and he set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together, and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you, and also may believe in you forever." And Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.*

Moses called the elders and told them what the LORD had said. "All the people answered together," and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

They meant it. But they did not know their own hearts. Within weeks they would be dancing around a golden calf (32:1-6). The Mosaic covenant would show that, left to ourselves, we cannot

keep God's law. That is part of why God gave it. Paul says the law was added because of transgressions, until the promised Seed, Christ, should come (Galatians 3:19).

"Look, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you, and also may believe in you forever." God would speak so the people could hear. This would confirm Moses as God's true messenger.

**19:10-13** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down in the eyes of all the people on Mount Sinai. And you shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves* ***against*** *going up on the mountain and touching its edge; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. A hand shall not touch him, for he shall surely be stoned or surely be shot; whether animal or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn draws out* ***its sound****, they shall go up on the mountain."*

"Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments." To sanctify means to set apart as holy, to make ready for God. Washing their clothes was an outward sign of inward readiness. You do not come into the presence of the holy God carelessly.

"For on the third day the LORD will come down in the eyes of all the people on Mount Sinai." The whole nation would see God's glory come down on the mountain.

Moses was to set limits all around the mountain: "Take heed to yourselves against going up on the mountain and touching its edge; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death." No one was even to touch the one who broke this rule. He was to be stoned or shot with arrows from a distance, "whether animal or man."

This sounds severe, and it is. God was teaching Israel a lesson they needed to learn before anything else: He is holy, and sinful people cannot simply walk into His presence. The barrier around the mountain was for their protection. Later the tabernacle, with its curtains, priests and sacrifices, would teach the same lesson every day, and point to the One who would open the way.

"When the ram's horn draws out its sound, they shall go up on the mountain." A ram's horn, or shofar, was blown as a signal. When it sounded long, the people could come near the mountain.

**19:14-15** *And Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and he sanctified the people, and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, "Be ready for three days; do not draw near to a woman."*

Moses went down and sanctified the people, "and they washed their garments."

"Be ready for three days; do not draw near to a woman." For these three days, husbands and wives were to keep apart. This does not mean that marriage or the marriage bed is sinful. Scripture honors both (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4). It was a time to set everything else aside and give full attention to meeting God. Paul says a husband and wife may agree to be apart for a short time to give themselves to prayer, and then come together again (1 Corinthians 7:5).

**19:16-19** *And it was on the third day, when it was morning, and **there** were thunders and lightnings and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a ram's horn very strong; and all the people who **were** in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out from the camp to meet God, and they stood at the lower part of the mountain. And Mount Sinai smoked, all of it, because the LORD had come down on it in the fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of the furnace, and the whole mountain trembled exceedingly. And the sound of the ram's horn was going on and growing very strong; Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice.*

"On the third day, when it was morning, and there were thunders and lightnings and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a ram's horn very strong." Picture the scene. Lightning flashing, thunder rolling, a heavy cloud and the loud blast of a horn with no one blowing it. "And all the people who were in the camp trembled."

Moses brought the people out "to meet God." The meeting was the whole point.

"Mount Sinai smoked, all of it, because the LORD had come down on it in the fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of the furnace, and the whole mountain trembled exceedingly." Fire is often a sign of God's holy presence in Scripture, as at the burning bush. The whole mountain shook.

"The sound of the ram's horn was going on and growing very strong; Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice."

Hebrews 12:18-24 looks back at this day. It says believers in Christ have not come to a mountain of fire and darkness and storm, so fearful that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." Instead we have come "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. We come to God with confidence through Christ. But Hebrews also warns that "our God is also a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Grace does not make God any less holy.

**19:20-25** *And the LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to see, and many of them fall. And also let the priests who draw near to the LORD sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." And Moses said to the LORD, "The people are not able to go up to Mount Sinai, for You, You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds for the mountain, and sanctify it.'" And the LORD said to him, "Go, go down, and you shall come up, you and Aaron with you; and let not the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them." And Moses went down to the people, and he spoke to them.*

"The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

Right away God sent him back down with a warning: "Warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to see, and many of them fall." God knew their curiosity could cost them their lives. Even the priests had to "sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." These priests

were probably the firstborn or heads of families who served before the Levites were set apart for that work.

Moses answered that the people could not come up, because God had already told them to set limits. But God said again, "Go, go down." God repeated the warning because He cared. He did not want anyone to die. Moses would come back up with Aaron.

"And Moses went down to the people, and he spoke to them." The scene is set. Next, God Himself will speak the Ten Commandments.

How do you think of God? Some people see Him as a kind grandfather who overlooks sin. Sinai shows us a different picture. He is holy, and He is to be feared. And yet He came down to meet His people and to speak to them. Through Jesus Christ, the way to this holy God is now open to all who come through Him (John 14:6).

## Chapter 19 Summary

Three months after leaving Egypt, Israel came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped before the mountain. God called Moses and reminded Israel that He had carried them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself. He offered them a covenant: if they obeyed His voice and kept His covenant, they would be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The people said they would do all the LORD had spoken. God told Moses that He would come in a thick cloud and speak so the people could hear. The people were to sanctify themselves, wash their clothes and be ready for the third day, and limits were set around the mountain so that no one would touch it and die. On the third day there was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, a loud ram's horn, fire and smoke, and the mountain shook. The LORD came down on the mountain and called Moses up, then sent him back to warn the people and the priests not to break through to see Him.

## Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. How long after leaving Egypt did Israel reach Sinai, and what promise from 3:12 came true there? (19:1-2)

2. What did God remind Israel He had done for them? (19:4)

3. What three things did God promise Israel if they kept His covenant? (19:5-6)

4. What did the people promise, and how well did they keep it? (19:8; 32:1-6)

5. How were the people to prepare to meet God? (19:10-15)

6. Why were limits set around the mountain? (19:12-13, 21)

7. What did the people see and hear on the third day? (19:16-19)

8. How does Hebrews 12:18-24 compare Mount Sinai with what believers in Christ have come to?

9. God saved Israel before He gave them the law. Why does that order matter for how you live as a Christian?

10. Do you tend to think of God as too easy to approach, or as too far away to approach? How does this chapter, along with Jesus' work, balance that?

# Chapter 20: The Ten Commandments

## Scripture

**20:1-17** And God spoke all these words, saying, "I ***am*** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from a house of slaves. There shall not be for you other gods before My face. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any form which ***is*** in the heavens above, or which ***is*** on the earth beneath, or which ***is*** in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not be made to serve them; for I, the LORD your God, ***am*** a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third and on the fourth ***generation*** of those who hate Me, and doing steadfast love to thousands, to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments. You shall not lift up the name of the LORD your God to emptiness, for the LORD will not leave unpunished whoever lifts up His name to emptiness. Remember the day of the Sabbath, to sanctify it. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, and the seventh day ***is*** a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and your livestock, and your sojourner who ***is*** within your gates. For ***in*** six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that ***is*** in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the day of the Sabbath, and He sanctified it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the ground which the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not answer against your neighbor ***as*** a witness of falsehood. You shall not covet the house of your neighbor; you shall not covet the wife of your neighbor, and his male servant, and his female servant, and his ox, and his donkey, and anything that ***belongs*** to your neighbor."

**20:18-26** And all the people were seeing the thunders and the flashes and the sound of the ram's horn and the mountain smoking; and the people saw, and they trembled, and they stood from a distance. And they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will listen; and let not God speak with us, lest we die." And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be before your faces, so that you do not sin." And the people stood from a distance, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God ***was***. And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen that from the heavens I have spoken with you. You shall not make with Me gods of silver, and gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make for Me an altar of stones, you shall not build them ***of*** hewn ***stone***; for you have wielded your tool on it, and you have profaned it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be uncovered on it.'"

## Chapter 20 Preview

From the top of the smoking mountain, God Himself speaks to Israel. He begins by reminding them who He is: the LORD their God, who brought them out of slavery. Then He gives ten commands. The first four are about our duty to God: no other gods, no images, no empty use of His

name, and keeping the Sabbath holy. The last six are about our duty to other people: honor parents, and do not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie about a neighbor, or covet. Jesus summed them up in two: love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40).

The people are terrified by the thunder, the lightning and the sound of the horn. They stand far off and beg Moses to speak to them instead of God. Moses tells them not to be afraid, because God has come to test them so that the fear of Him will keep them from sin. Then God gives the first laws about worship: no gods of silver or gold, and simple altars of earth or uncut stone. The Ten Commandments show us God's holy character and our own sin, and they point us to Christ, who kept the law perfectly for us.

## Chapter 20 Study

**20:1** *And God spoke all these words, saying,*

"And God spoke all these words, saying." Moses did not make up the Ten Commandments. God spoke them out loud to the whole nation from the mountain (Deuteronomy 5:22). Later He wrote them with His own finger on two tablets of stone (31:18).

The Hebrew calls them the ten words (34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13). They are the heart of the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. The rest of the laws in chapters 21 to 23 apply these ten to the everyday life of the nation.

How should a Christian read them? Jesus said He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). Paul says the law shows us our sin (Romans 3:20) and was our "child-guardian to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). No one is saved by keeping these commands, because no one keeps them perfectly. But they still show us what God is like and how He wants us to live, and nine of the ten are repeated in the New Testament as commands for believers.

**20:2** *"I **am** the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from a house of slaves.*

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from a house of slaves."

Before God gives one command, He tells Israel who He is and what He has done. He is the LORD, the God who keeps His covenant. He is their God. And He has already set them free. The commands come after the rescue.

That is the gospel pattern. God does not say, Obey Me, and I will free you. He says, I have freed you, so now live as My people. We do not obey God to earn His love. We obey Him because He has already loved us and saved us. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

**20:3** *There shall not be for you other gods before My face.*

"There shall not be for you other gods before My face."

The first commandment is first for a reason. Everything else flows from it. Israel had just come out of Egypt, a land full of gods. Canaan, where they were going, was full of gods too. The LORD says: none of them, only Me.

Before My face means in My presence, and since God is everywhere, it means anywhere at all. We may not bow to statues, but we still have other gods. Anything we love, trust or fear more than God becomes our god: money, comfort, approval, success, even family. Paul calls covetousness "idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). What do you run to first when you are afraid? That may show you what your god is.

**20:4** *You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any form which **is** in the heavens above, or which **is** on the earth beneath, or which **is** in the waters under the earth.*

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any form which is in the heavens above, or which is on the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth."

The first commandment tells us whom to worship. The second tells us how. Israel was not to make an image to stand for God or for any other god. Egypt worshiped gods shaped like birds, animals and fish. The LORD said, Do not make Me look like anything you have seen.

Why? Because God is spirit (John 4:24), and no image can show what He is like. Any image we make shrinks Him down to our size. Moses later reminded Israel that at Sinai they "did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke" to them (Deuteronomy 4:15). Israel broke this commandment within weeks with the golden calf, which they called a feast to the LORD (32:4-5).

God has given us one true image of Himself: His Son. Christ "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

**20:5-6** *You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not be made to serve them; for I, the LORD your God, **am** a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third and on the fourth **generation** of those who hate Me, and doing steadfast love to thousands, to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments.*

"You shall not bow down to them, and you shall not be made to serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,"

Jealous here does not mean petty or insecure. It means the right and holy zeal of a husband who will not share his wife's love with another man. God loves His people too much to share them with idols. Idolatry is spiritual adultery.

"Visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me." Does God punish children for their parents' sins? Ezekiel 18:20 says plainly that a son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. Notice the words "of those who hate Me." When children follow their parents in hating God, the effects of sin pass down. We all know families where sin has run through generations.

But see the contrast: "doing steadfast love to thousands, to those who love Me and to those who keep My commandments." Judgment reaches three or four generations. Steadfast love reaches thousands, which may mean thousands of generations (Deuteronomy 7:9). God's mercy is far bigger than His anger. One person who turns to God can change the course of a family for generations.

**20:7** *You shall not lift up the name of the LORD your God to emptiness, for the LORD will not leave unpunished whoever lifts up His name to emptiness.*

"You shall not lift up the name of the LORD your God to emptiness, for the LORD will not leave unpunished whoever lifts up His name to emptiness."

To lift up a name to emptiness means to use it in a false, empty or careless way. In God's name stands all that He is. This commandment forbids using His name to swear a false oath, to curse, to make a promise we do not intend to keep, or to toss it around without thought.

It goes deeper than words. Calling ourselves by the LORD's name and then living as if He does not matter also takes His name in vain. Jesus taught us to pray, "let Your name be sanctified" (Matthew 6:9).

How do you speak about God? Do you use His name with honor, or out of habit? "The LORD will not leave unpunished" anyone who treats His name lightly.

**20:8-11** *Remember the day of the Sabbath, to sanctify it. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, and the seventh day **is** a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and your livestock, and your sojourner who **is** within your gates. For **in** six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that **is** in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the day of the Sabbath, and He sanctified it.*

"Remember the day of the Sabbath, to sanctify it." Sabbath means rest, or stopping. Israel had already met the Sabbath with the manna (16:23-30). Now God made it part of His covenant.

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, and the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God." Work is good, and God commands six days of it. But the seventh day was set apart for rest. Everyone in the house was to rest, sons and daughters, male and female servants, even the animals, "and your sojourner who is within your gates." In a world where slaves and animals were worked without end, this was a gift of mercy.

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the day of the Sabbath, and He sanctified it." The Sabbath was built on the pattern of creation (Genesis 2:2-3). Deuteronomy 5:15 adds another reason: Israel was to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt and that the LORD brought them out. The Sabbath was a weekly reminder that they were free. Later God called it a sign between Him and Israel (31:13-17).

How does this apply to Christians? This is the one commandment of the ten that the New Testament does not repeat as a command for the church. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for the sake of man, not man for the sake of the Sabbath" and that He is "Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). Paul says Sabbaths are "a shadow of the things coming, but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17), and he tells believers not to judge one another over days (Romans 14:5). The early church gathered "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), the day Jesus rose. Believers differ here. Some hold that the Sabbath command now applies to Sunday, the Lord's day. Some keep the seventh day. Many see it fulfilled in the rest we have in Christ, "a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9-10), while still valuing a regular day of rest and worship. Whatever view we hold, God made us to need rest, and He wants a part of our time set apart for Him.

**20:12** *Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the ground which the LORD your God is giving you.*

"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long on the ground which the LORD your God is giving you."

Now the commands turn from God to people, and they begin at home. To honor means to give weight to, to treat as important. Children honor parents by obeying them while young, respecting them always, and caring for them when they are old (Mark 7:10-13; 1 Timothy 5:4).

Paul calls this "the first commandment with a promise" (Ephesians 6:2-3). For Israel, the promise was long life in the land God gave them. A nation where families are strong is a nation that lasts.

Honor does not mean we must follow parents into sin, and it does not mean a person must stay under abuse. But it does mean that how we treat our parents matters to God.

**20:13** *You shall not murder.*

"You shall not murder."

Human life is sacred because every person is made in God's image (Genesis 9:6). The Hebrew word here, ratsach, means the unlawful killing of a person. That is why the SLB says murder rather than kill. The same Law allows killing in some cases, such as just war and the death penalty for murder (21:12), so this command is not against all taking of life.

Jesus went to the heart. He said anyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be liable to the judgment (Matthew 5:21-22). John says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). Murder starts in the heart, with anger and hatred. Have you kept this command in your heart?

**20:14** *You shall not commit adultery.*

"You shall not commit adultery."

God made marriage, one man and one woman for life (Genesis 2:24). Adultery is sexual unfaithfulness by a married person. It breaks the covenant of marriage, wounds the spouse and

children, and sins against God, as Joseph knew when he said he could not do this great evil and sin against God (Genesis 39:9).

Jesus said that "everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). This command protects marriage, and it calls every one of us, married or single, to purity in thought and deed. Where we have failed, Christ forgives and cleanses those who confess (1 John 1:9).

**20:15** *You shall not steal.*

"You shall not steal."

God gives people the right to own things. Stealing takes what God has given to someone else. That includes not only taking things but cheating in business, not paying fair wages, not giving an honest day's work, and not paying what we owe.

Paul gives the Christian answer: "Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with the hands what is good, so that he may have something to share with the one who has need" (Ephesians 4:28). The thief becomes a giver. That is what grace does.

**20:16** *You shall not answer against your neighbor **as** a witness of falsehood.*

"You shall not answer against your neighbor as a witness of falsehood."

The first meaning is in court. A false witness could ruin a man or even cost him his life. Later laws require two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), and a false witness was to receive the punishment he tried to bring on his neighbor (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

But the command reaches all our words: lies, gossip, slander, and twisting the truth to hurt someone. Jesus was condemned by false witnesses (Mark 14:56-57). Paul says, "speak truth each one with his neighbor, because we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). God is truth, and His people are to speak the truth.

**20:17** *You shall not covet the house of your neighbor; you shall not covet the wife of your neighbor, and his male servant, and his female servant, and his ox, and his donkey, and anything that **belongs** to your neighbor."*

"You shall not covet the house of your neighbor; you shall not covet the wife of your neighbor," nor his servants, ox, donkey, "and anything that belongs to your neighbor."

To covet means to desire strongly what belongs to someone else. The first nine commands could, in part, be kept outwardly. This one is all in the heart. No court could prove it. Only God sees it.

This was the command that showed Paul his sin. He wrote, "I also had not known covetousness except that the law was saying," and then he quoted this command (Romans 7:7). He could keep the outward rules, but he could not stop the desires of his heart. That is what the law does. It shows us that we are sinners who need a Savior.

The cure for coveting is contentment. Paul learned "to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Philippians 4:11), and Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that God has said He will never leave us or forsake us. If we have Him, we have enough.

**20:18-19** *And all the people were seeing the thunders and the flashes and the sound of the ram's horn and the mountain smoking; and the people saw, and they trembled, and they stood from a distance. And they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will listen; and let not God speak with us, lest we die."*

"All the people were seeing the thunders and the flashes and the sound of the ram's horn and the mountain smoking; and the people saw, and they trembled, and they stood from a distance."

Hearing God's voice was more than they could bear. They said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will listen; and let not God speak with us, lest we die." They wanted a go-between, a mediator.

Their fear was right in one way. Sinful people cannot stand before a holy God on their own. God later said that what they asked was good, and He promised a Prophet like Moses who would speak His words (Deuteronomy 5:28; 18:15-18). That Prophet is Jesus (Acts 3:22-23). "There is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

**20:20-21** *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be before your faces, so that you do not sin." And the people stood from a distance, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God* ***was****.*

"Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be before your faces, so that you do not sin."

Moses says do not be afraid, and then that God came so they would fear Him. Is that a contradiction? No. There is a fear that runs from God in terror, and a fear that respects Him and stays close in reverence. God did not want them to run away from Him. He wanted them to take Him seriously enough not to sin. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

"The people stood from a distance, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was." The people stood far off. Moses went in. Through Christ, believers can now "draw near" with confidence (Hebrews 10:19-22).

**20:22-23** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen that from the heavens I have spoken with you. You shall not make with Me gods of silver, and gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.*

"You yourselves have seen that from the heavens I have spoken with you." God now begins the laws that follow the Ten Commandments, called in 24:7 "the book of the covenant." He starts again with worship.

"You shall not make with Me gods of silver, and gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves." Not even alongside the LORD. They had heard His voice from heaven. They had seen no form.

They were not to make any image to stand beside Him. Within weeks Aaron would make a calf of gold (32:4).

**20:24** *An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you, and I will bless you.*

"An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings." An altar is a raised place where sacrifices were offered to God. A burnt offering was wholly burned on the altar as a gift to God. A peace offering was shared: part was burned, and the worshiper ate the rest in a meal of fellowship with God.

The altar was to be simple, made of earth. God did not need something grand. He wanted hearts that came to Him His way.

"In every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you, and I will bless you." God chooses where He will meet His people. Later He would choose one place for His name (Deuteronomy 12:5). Now, through Christ, God meets His people wherever they worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

**20:25-26** *And if you make for Me an altar of stones, you shall not build them **of** hewn **stone**; for you have wielded your tool on it, and you have profaned it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be uncovered on it.'"*

"If you make for Me an altar of stones, you shall not build them of hewn stone; for you have wielded your tool on it, and you have profaned it." Cut and shaped stone could become a work of art that drew attention to the builder. God's altar was to be made as He made the stones, untouched by human skill. We cannot add to what God provides for our approach to Him. Many have seen in this a picture of the gospel: our salvation is God's work, not something we shape (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"You shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be uncovered on it." In the pagan religions around Israel, worship was often joined to sexual immorality. God's worship was to be modest and pure. Later the priests were given linen undergarments for the same reason (28:42-43).

These rules for altars point forward. The only sacrifice that could truly take away sin was the one Christ made on the cross, once for all (Hebrews 10:10-14).

## Chapter 20 Summary

God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel from Mount Sinai. He began by naming Himself as the LORD their God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. Then He commanded them to have no other gods, to make no images to worship, to not take His name in vain, and to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, resting on the seventh day as He rested after creation. He commanded them to honor their parents, and not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness or covet. The people saw the thunder, lightning and smoke and heard the horn, and they trembled

and stood far off, asking Moses to speak to them instead of God. Moses told them not to be afraid, because God came to put His fear in them so they would not sin. Then the LORD told Moses that the people must not make gods of silver or gold, and that they were to make simple altars of earth or uncut stone, without steps, where He would come and bless them.

## Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. What did God say about Himself before He gave any commands, and why does the order matter? (20:2)

2. Which commandments deal with our relationship to God, and which deal with our relationship to others? (20:3-17)

3. What does it mean that God is a "jealous God"? (20:5)

4. What two reasons do Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15 give for the Sabbath?

5. Which commandment comes with a promise, according to Ephesians 6:2-3? (20:12)

6. How did Jesus deepen the commands against murder and adultery in Matthew 5:21-28?

7. Why do you think the command against coveting showed Paul his sin? (20:17; Romans 7:7)

8. Why did the people ask Moses to speak to them instead of God, and how does Jesus fulfill that need? (20:19; 1 Timothy 2:5)

9. Which "other god" is most likely to compete with the LORD for first place in your heart?

10. Read through the Ten Commandments slowly. Which one shows you most clearly your need for Christ, and what will you do with that today?

# Chapter 21: Laws on Servants and Injuries

## Scripture

**21:1-11** "And these ***are*** the judgments which you shall set before them. When you buy a Hebrew slave, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he ***is*** the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out by himself. And if the slave surely says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him near to God, and he shall bring him near to the door or to the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with the awl, and he shall serve him forever. And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves go out. If she ***is*** evil in the eyes of her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be ransomed; he shall not have rule to sell her to a foreign people, in his dealing treacherously with her. And if he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the judgment of the daughters. If he takes another for himself, her food, her covering, and her marital right he shall not reduce. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without money.

**21:12-27** Whoever strikes a man, and he dies, shall surely be put to death. And ***if*** he did not lie in wait, but God let ***him*** fall into his hand, then I will designate for you a place to which he may flee. And if a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor, to kill him with cunning, you shall take him from My altar to die. And whoever strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And whoever steals a man, and sells him, or he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. And whoever curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And if men quarrel, and a man strikes his neighbor with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die, and he falls to bed, if he rises and walks about outside on his staff, then the one who struck ***him*** shall be free of guilt; only he shall pay ***for*** his sitting ***idle***, and he shall surely have ***him*** healed. And if a man strikes his male slave or his female slave with the rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be avenged. Only, if he remains a day or two days, he shall not be avenged; for he ***is*** his money. And if men struggle together, and they strike a pregnant woman, and her children come out, and there is no harm, he shall surely be fined, just as the husband of the woman lays on him; and he shall give by judges. And if there is harm, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. And if a man strikes the eye of his male slave or the eye of his female slave, and destroys it, he shall set him free for his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male slave or the tooth of his female slave, he shall set him free for his tooth.

**21:28-36** And if an ox gores a man or a woman, and he dies, the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; and the owner of the ox ***shall be*** free of guilt. And if the ox ***was*** prone to gore from yesterday ***and*** the day before, and it has been testified to its owner, and he does not guard it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and also its owner shall be put to death. If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give the ransom of his life according to all that is laid on him. Whether it gores a son or gores a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. If the ox gores a male slave or a female slave, he shall give to his master

approximately 12 ounces (thirty shekels) of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall return money to its owner, and the dead ***animal*** shall be his. And if the ox of a man strikes the ox of his neighbor, and it dies, then they shall sell the living ox and divide its money, and also the dead ***animal*** they shall divide. Or ***if*** it is known that the ox ***was*** prone to gore from yesterday ***and*** the day before, and its owner has not guarded it, he shall surely make restitution, ox for ox, and the dead ***animal*** shall be his.

## Chapter 21 Preview

After the Ten Commandments, God gives Moses a set of laws often called the Book of the Covenant (24:7), which runs through chapter 23. These are the "judgments," case laws that show how the Ten Commandments were to work in the daily life of Israel as a nation. They are written as cases: when a man does this, then this shall be done.

Chapter 21 begins with Hebrew servants who sold themselves because of debt, and with the protection of a young woman given in marriage as a servant. Then come laws about taking life, attacks on parents, kidnapping, fights, injuries, harm to a pregnant woman, and an ox that gores. Some of these laws are hard for modern readers. I will try to explain what they meant for Israel then, how they limited cruelty in a hard world, how Christ fulfills the law, and what they still teach us about justice, the value of human life, and love for our neighbor.

## Chapter 21 Study

**21:1** *"And these **are** the judgments which you shall set before them.*

"And these are the judgments which you shall set before them." Judgments here means legal rulings, the decisions a judge would use in court.

How should we read these laws? They were given to Israel as a nation under the Mosaic covenant. Christians are not under that covenant as a legal code (Romans 6:14; Hebrews 8:13), and we are not saved by keeping any law (Galatians 2:16). But Jesus said He came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17), and Paul says "Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16). These laws show us God's justice, His care for the weak, and the worth He places on every human life. The New Testament repeats their moral heart: love your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14).

These laws were also given to a real people in a hard world. They did not create every custom they dealt with. Often they took a custom that already existed and limited it, to protect the weak. Jesus said Moses permitted divorce "in view of your hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8). We should keep that in mind as we read.

**21:2-4** *When you buy a Hebrew slave, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he **is** the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out by himself.*

"When you buy a Hebrew slave, six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing."

The first law is about servants. That is no accident. Israel had just come out of slavery. The Hebrew word ebed can mean a servant or a slave. Here it means a Hebrew who sold himself, or was sold, because of a debt he could not pay. There were no bankruptcy courts. A poor man would work off his debt by serving another family.

This was not the slavery of the American South. It was not based on race. It was not lifelong. It was limited to six years, and then he went free "for nothing," owing nothing. Deuteronomy 15:13-15 adds that he was not to be sent away empty, but given food and flocks, because Israel was to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt. Leviticus 25:39 says an Israelite was not to be worked like a slave at all, but treated like a hired worker.

"If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him." His family was not to be broken up by his debt.

"If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out by himself." This is hard to read. The wife given by the master was herself a servant under her own terms, perhaps a foreign servant or one whose years were not yet finished. The man could go free, but the law did not let him take what was not his. Verses 5-6 show the way the family could stay together.

**21:5-6** *And if the slave surely says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him near to God, and he shall bring him near to the door or to the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with the awl, and he shall serve him forever.*

If the servant said, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free," then he could choose to stay. Notice the word love. This was a home where the servant was treated well enough that he wanted to stay for life.

"His master shall bring him near to God," which may mean before the judges who served in God's name, or at the sanctuary. "His master shall pierce his ear with the awl, and he shall serve him forever." An awl is a small pointed tool. The pierced ear at the doorpost was a public sign that he had chosen this freely.

Psalm 40:6 says, "ears You have dug for me," and Hebrews 10:5-7 applies that psalm to Christ. Many have seen in this servant a picture of Jesus, who out of love took "the form of a slave" (Philippians 2:7) and "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). It is a beautiful picture, though the New Testament does not tie it directly to this verse.

**21:7-11** *And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves go out. If she **is** evil in the eyes of her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be ransomed; he shall not have rule to sell her to a foreign people, in his dealing treacherously with her. And if he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the judgment of the daughters. If he takes another for himself, her food, her covering, and her marital right he shall not reduce. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without money.*

"And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves go out." In that day a very poor father might give his daughter to another family, with the plan that she would become a wife to the master or to his son. That is the setting here. This law did not allow it to be done carelessly. It protected her.

If the master did not want her as his wife, "he shall let her be ransomed," meaning her family could buy her back. "He shall not have rule to sell her to a foreign people." If he gave her to his son, he had to treat her as a daughter. If he took another wife, "her food, her covering, and her marital right he shall not reduce." And if he failed in any of these three, "then she shall go out for nothing, without money."

In a world where a poor young woman had almost no rights, God's law gave her food, clothing, the rights of a wife, and a way out if she was wronged. God's design from the beginning was one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). The Law does not praise taking a second wife. It limits the harm when men did it.

**21:12-14** *Whoever strikes a man, and he dies, shall surely be put to death. And **if** he did not lie in wait, but God let **him** fall into his hand, then I will designate for you a place to which he may flee. And if a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor, to kill him with cunning, you shall take him from My altar to die.*

"Whoever strikes a man, and he dies, shall surely be put to death." Murder was punished by death. This goes back to God's word to Noah: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). The death penalty was not because life was cheap. It was because life is so precious, being made in God's image.

But the law made a careful difference. "And if he did not lie in wait, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will designate for you a place to which he may flee." This is an accidental killing. God promised a place of safety. Later this became the cities of refuge (Numbers 35; Joshua 20), where the killer would be safe until his case was judged.

"If a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor, to kill him with cunning, you shall take him from My altar to die." A murderer could not hide by grabbing the altar. God's mercy is not a shelter for the unrepentant.

**21:15-17** *And whoever strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And whoever steals a man, and sells him, or he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. And whoever curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.*

Three more crimes carried the death penalty. "Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." "Whoever steals a man, and sells him, or he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death." "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."

Striking or cursing parents may seem small to us, but in Israel the family was the foundation of the whole nation. To attack your parents was to attack the order God made. It is the fifth commandment taken seriously (20:12). Deuteronomy 21:18-21 shows that such cases came before the elders, not a hot-tempered father.

Look closely at verse 16. Kidnapping a person to sell him was a capital crime. The slave trade that took millions of Africans across the ocean was built on exactly this sin. God's law condemned it with death. Paul lists "enslavers" among the lawless in 1 Timothy 1:10. Those who used the Bible to defend that trade twisted it.

How do these death penalty laws apply now? They were given to Israel's courts, under the Mosaic covenant. The church does not carry the sword (John 18:36), though Paul says governments may (Romans 13:4). These laws still show how serious these sins are in God's eyes. And they show what all of us deserve, since every one of us has dishonored our parents in some way. Christ took the death we deserved (Romans 5:8).

**21:18-19** *And if men quarrel, and a man strikes his neighbor with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die, and he falls to bed, if he rises and walks about outside on his staff, then the one who struck* ***him*** *shall be free of guilt; only he shall pay* ***for*** *his sitting* ***idle****, and he shall surely have* ***him*** *healed.*

"If men quarrel, and a man strikes his neighbor with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die, and he falls to bed," then if the injured man got up and walked with a staff, the attacker would not be put to death. "Only he shall pay for his sitting idle, and he shall surely have him healed."

This is a fair law. The one who caused the harm paid for the lost work and the medical care. Justice in God's law was not only about punishment. It was about making things right for the one who was hurt.

**21:20-21** *And if a man strikes his male slave or his female slave with the rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be avenged. Only, if he remains a day or two days, he shall not be avenged; for he* ***is*** *his money.*

"And if a man strikes his male slave or his female slave with the rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be avenged." In the nations around Israel, a master could often kill his slave with no penalty. Not in Israel. If a master killed his servant, the master was punished, because the servant's life mattered to God.

"Only, if he remains a day or two days, he shall not be avenged; for he is his money." This is one of the hardest lines in the Law. It covers a case where it was not clear that the master meant to kill.

The master's loss of the servant's work was counted as his penalty. These words do not mean that a servant was only property. Verses 26-27 show the opposite. The Law worked within a hard world and set limits on it. The New Testament goes much further, telling masters to give their slaves "what is righteous and fair," knowing they also have a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1), and calling a slave a "beloved brother" (Philemon 1:16).

**21:22-25** *And if men struggle together, and they strike a pregnant woman, and her children come out, and there is no harm, he shall surely be fined, just as the husband of the woman lays on him; and he shall give by judges. And if there is harm, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

"And if men struggle together, and they strike a pregnant woman, and her children come out, and there is no harm, he shall surely be fined." Two men are fighting, and one hits a pregnant woman nearby, and she gives birth early.

Good Bible teachers read this in two main ways. Many take it, as the SLB's words "her children come out" suggest, to mean a premature birth. If mother and child are not harmed, the man pays a fine set by the husband and approved by judges. "And if there is harm," to the mother or the child, the penalty matches the harm, even "life for life." On this reading God treats the unborn child as a person, equal in worth to anyone else. Others read it as a miscarriage, with the fine for the child's loss and the "harm" meaning harm to the mother. Even on that reading, the unborn child's life has value and is not to be taken lightly. The rest of Scripture shows that God knows and forms children in the womb (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:41).

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." This is the law of equal justice. It was given to judges, not to people taking revenge. Its point was to limit punishment: no more than the harm done, and no less. It kept the rich from buying their way out and kept angry people from going too far. A payment could stand in for some penalties, as verse 30 shows, and Numbers 35:31 forbids a ransom only for a murderer, which suggests that for lesser injuries a payment was often allowed.

Jesus quoted this law and told His followers not to take personal revenge, but to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39). He was not overturning justice in the courts. He was teaching us not to use the law to feed our own anger.

**21:26-27** *And if a man strikes the eye of his male slave or the eye of his female slave, and destroys it, he shall set him free for his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male slave or the tooth of his female slave, he shall set him free for his tooth.*

"And if a man strikes the eye of his male slave or the eye of his female slave, and destroys it, he shall set him free for his eye." The same for a knocked-out tooth.

This is a remarkable law. If a master caused even a lost tooth, the servant went free. The master lost the servant's whole remaining service. That shows that servants were people with rights, not tools. It also gave masters a strong reason never to strike a servant at all. Where else in the ancient world would a slave go free for a tooth?

**21:28-32** *And if an ox gores a man or a woman, and he dies, the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; and the owner of the ox **shall be** free of guilt. And if the ox **was** prone to gore from yesterday **and** the day before, and it has been testified to its owner, and he does not guard it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and also its owner shall be put to death. If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give the ransom of his life according to all that is laid on him. Whether it gores a son or gores a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. If the ox gores a male slave or a female slave, he shall give to his master approximately 12 ounces (thirty shekels) of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.*

Now the law turns to animals. "If an ox gores a man or a woman, and he dies, the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten." Even an animal that took a human life was put to death (Genesis 9:5). The owner was free of guilt, because he could not have known.

But if the ox was known to gore and the owner had been warned and did nothing, and the ox killed someone, "the ox shall be stoned, and also its owner shall be put to death." Careless neglect that costs a life is a serious sin. A ransom could be set instead, and he would pay "the ransom of his life." The law applied equally whether the victim was a son or a daughter.

"If the ox gores a male slave or a female slave, he shall give to his master approximately 12 ounces (thirty shekels) of silver." A shekel was a weight of silver, about four tenths of an ounce. Thirty shekels was the price paid for a servant. It is the same price the chief priests paid Judas to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:15; Zechariah 11:12-13). The Son of God was valued at the price of a servant gored by an ox.

How does this apply now? We are responsible for what we own and control. If we know something is dangerous and do nothing, we share the blame when someone is hurt.

**21:33-36** *And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall return money to its owner, and the dead **animal** shall be his. And if the ox of a man strikes the ox of his neighbor, and it dies, then they shall sell the living ox and divide its money, and also the dead **animal** they shall divide. Or **if** it is known that the ox **was** prone to gore from yesterday **and** the day before, and its owner has not guarded it, he shall surely make restitution, ox for ox, and the dead **animal** shall be his.*

"If a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution." Restitution means paying back to make things right. The owner of the pit paid for the animal and kept the dead one.

If one man's ox killed another man's ox, they sold the living ox and divided the money and the dead animal. Both shared the loss. But if the ox was known to gore and the owner did not guard it, "he shall surely make restitution, ox for ox."

These may seem like small matters. But they show that God cares about everyday fairness between neighbors. Holiness is not only for the tabernacle. It reaches the farm and the field. Loving your neighbor means covering your pits.

## Chapter 21 Summary

God gave Moses judgments for Israel. A Hebrew who served because of debt was to go free in the seventh year; if he loved his master and family and chose to stay, his ear was pierced as a sign that he would serve for life. A daughter given as a servant-wife was protected: she could be bought back, not sold to foreigners, and was to have food, clothing and marital rights, or go free. Murder was punished by death, but a place of refuge was given for accidental killing. Striking or cursing a parent and kidnapping a person to sell him were also capital crimes. A man who injured another in a fight paid for lost time and healing. A master who killed a servant was punished, and a servant who lost an eye or tooth went free. If men fighting struck a pregnant woman and her children came out, a fine was paid if there was no harm, and if there was harm, the penalty was life for life, eye for eye. An ox that killed a person was stoned, and a careless owner who had been warned was guilty too. Owners paid for harm caused by open pits and dangerous animals.

## Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. How long did a Hebrew servant serve, and how was he to be treated when he went free? (21:2; Deuteronomy 15:13-15)

2. Why might a servant choose to stay with his master for life, and what was the sign of it? (21:5-6)

3. What protections did the law give a young woman given as a servant-wife? (21:7-11)

4. How did the law treat an accidental killing differently from murder? (21:12-14)

5. What does verse 16 say about kidnapping and selling a person, and how does that bear on race-based slavery?

6. What happened if a master knocked out a servant's tooth? What does that show about servants' worth? (21:26-27)

7. What does verse 22 teach about the value of an unborn child, and what do Psalm 139:13 and Jeremiah 1:5 add?

8. What was the purpose of "eye for eye," and how did Jesus apply it to His followers? (21:24; Matthew 5:38-39)

9. Thirty shekels was the price of a servant (21:32). What does it stir in you that Jesus was betrayed for the same price?

10. Is there a "pit" in your life, something dangerous you know about and have not dealt with, that could hurt someone else?

# Chapter 22: Laws on Property and Justice

## Scripture

**22:1-15** If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall make restitution ***with*** five cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. If the thief is found in the breaking in, and he is struck, and he dies, ***there is*** no bloodguilt for him. If the sun has risen on him, ***there is*** bloodguilt for him. He shall surely make restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the stolen thing is surely found alive in his hand, whether ox or donkey or sheep, he shall make restitution double. If a man causes a field or a vineyard to be grazed over, and he lets loose his cattle, and it grazes in the field of another, he shall make restitution ***from*** the best of his field and the best of his vineyard. If fire goes out and finds thorns, and the heap of sheaves or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. If a man gives to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen from the house of the man, if the thief is found, he shall make restitution double. If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought near to God, ***to see*** whether he has not stretched out his hand on the property of his neighbor. For every matter of transgression, for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for garment, for every lost thing of which one says, 'This ***is*** it,' the case of the two of them shall come to God; whom God condemns shall make restitution double to his neighbor. If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any animal to keep, and it dies or is maimed or is carried off, no one seeing ***it***, the oath of the LORD shall be between the two of them, ***that*** he has not stretched out his hand on the property of his neighbor; and its owner shall accept ***it***, and he shall not make restitution. And if it is surely stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is surely torn in pieces, let him bring it ***as*** evidence; he shall not make restitution ***for*** the torn ***animal***. And if a man asks ***an animal*** from his neighbor, and it is maimed or dies, its owner not ***being*** with it, he shall surely make restitution. If its owner ***was*** with it, he shall not make restitution; if it ***was*** hired, it came for its hire.

**22:16-31** And if a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her ***to be*** his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall weigh out money according to the bride-price of the virgins. You shall not let a sorceress live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. Whoever sacrifices to the gods, except to the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction. And a sojourner you shall not mistreat, and you shall not oppress him; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Any widow and fatherless ***child*** you shall not afflict. If you surely afflict him, ***then*** if he surely cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger shall burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. If you lend money to My people, to the poor ***who is*** with you, you shall not be to him like a creditor; you shall not lay interest on him. If you surely take the cloak of your neighbor as a pledge, you shall return it to him by the time the sun goes ***down***, for it ***is*** his only covering; it ***is*** his cloak for his skin. In what shall he lie down? And it shall be, when he cries out to Me, then I will hear, for I ***am*** gracious. You shall not revile God, and a leader among your people you shall not curse. Your fullness and your juice you shall not delay ***to offer***. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. Thus you shall do with your ox ***and*** with your sheep:

seven days it shall be with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me. And you shall be men of holiness to Me; and flesh torn in the field you shall not eat; you shall throw it to the dog.

## Chapter 22 Preview

The Book of the Covenant goes on with laws about property. A thief must pay back more than he took. A man is responsible if his animals graze another man's field or his fire burns another man's grain. There are rules for goods left in someone's care, for borrowed animals, and for cases where no one saw what happened. These laws teach honesty, responsibility and making things right.

The second half of the chapter turns to a man who seduces a young woman, to three sins that carried the death penalty (sorcery, lying with an animal, and sacrificing to other gods), and then to some of the most tender laws in the Old Testament. God tells Israel not to mistreat the foreigner, the widow, the orphan or the poor, because He hears their cry. He tells them to respect Him and their leaders, to give Him the firstfruits and the firstborn, and to be holy.

## Chapter 22 Study

**22:1** *If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall make restitution **with** five cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.*

"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall make restitution with five cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep."

Restitution means paying back to make things right. In God's law a thief did not go to prison. He paid back, and more. Why five for an ox? An ox was a working animal, and the owner lost not only the animal but its plowing. Once the animal was killed or sold, it could not be returned, so the penalty was higher.

When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he said, "if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8). He knew this law, and his changed heart went beyond what the law required. Real repentance wants to make things right.

**22:2-4** *If the thief is found in the breaking in, and he is struck, and he dies, **there is** no bloodguilt for him. If the sun has risen on him, **there is** bloodguilt for him. He shall surely make restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the stolen thing is surely found alive in his hand, whether ox or donkey or sheep, he shall make restitution double.*

"If the thief is found in the breaking in, and he is struck, and he dies, there is no bloodguilt for him." Bloodguilt means guilt for shedding blood. A man defending his home at night, in the dark, could not tell if the thief meant to kill. He was not guilty.

"If the sun has risen on him, there is bloodguilt for him." In daylight, the owner could see who it was and call for help. Killing the thief then was not self-defense. A thief's life still mattered to God. Property is never worth more than a human life.

"He shall surely make restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft." A thief who could not pay would work it off as a servant, under the limits of 21:2. If the stolen animal was found alive with him, he paid back double.

**22:5-6** *If a man causes a field or a vineyard to be grazed over, and he lets loose his cattle, and it grazes in the field of another, he shall make restitution **from** the best of his field and the best of his vineyard. If fire goes out and finds thorns, and the heap of sheaves or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.*

"If a man causes a field or a vineyard to be grazed over, and he lets loose his cattle, and it grazes in the field of another, he shall make restitution from the best of his field and the best of his vineyard." Not the worst. The best.

"If fire goes out and finds thorns, and the heap of sheaves or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." Farmers often burned weeds and thorns. A fire could spread quickly in dry country. If you started it, you paid for it, even if you did not mean harm.

We are responsible for what we start. Careless words, careless actions and careless habits can spread like fire. James says the tongue is a small fire that can set a great forest burning (James 3:5-6).

**22:7-9** *If a man gives to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen from the house of the man, if the thief is found, he shall make restitution double. If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought near to God, **to see** whether he has not stretched out his hand on the property of his neighbor. For every matter of transgression, for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for garment, for every lost thing of which one says, 'This **is** it,' the case of the two of them shall come to God; whom God condemns shall make restitution double to his neighbor.*

These laws deal with goods left in a neighbor's care. In a world without banks, people left money or valuables with a trusted friend while traveling. If the goods were stolen and the thief was found, he paid double.

"If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought near to God," to see if he had taken it himself. Brought near to God probably means before the judges, who served in God's name, or to the sanctuary to take an oath. "Whom God condemns shall make restitution double to his neighbor."

Notice that every dispute over property, "for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for garment, for every lost thing," was finally a matter before God. God sees what no human judge can see. Hebrews 4:13 says everything is naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

**22:10-13** *If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any animal to keep, and it dies or is maimed or is carried off, no one seeing **it**, the oath of the LORD shall be between the two of them, **that** he has not stretched out his hand on the property of his neighbor; and its owner shall accept **it**, and he shall not make restitution. And if it is surely stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is surely torn in pieces, let him bring it **as** evidence; he shall not make restitution **for** the torn **animal**.*

If a man kept his neighbor's animal and it died, was hurt, or was carried off when no one saw, "the oath of the LORD shall be between the two of them." The keeper swore before the LORD that he had not taken it, and the owner was to accept that. An oath in the LORD's name was a serious thing, because God is the witness.

If it was stolen from him, he paid, since he should have guarded it. If a wild animal tore it, he was to "bring it as evidence," some part of the body, and he did not have to pay. Amos 3:12 mentions a shepherd rescuing two legs or a piece of an ear from a lion. These laws are practical, fair and full of common sense.

**22:14-15** *And if a man asks **an animal** from his neighbor, and it is maimed or dies, its owner not **being** with it, he shall surely make restitution. If its owner **was** with it, he shall not make restitution; if it **was** hired, it came for its hire.*

If a man borrowed an animal and it was hurt or died while the owner was not there, the borrower paid. If the owner was with it, the borrower did not pay. "If it was hired, it came for its hire." The rental price covered the risk.

These may seem like small things, but they matter. God cares how we treat what belongs to others. Do you take care of what you borrow? Do you return it in good shape? A Christian should be the most trustworthy neighbor on the street.

**22:16-17** *And if a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her **to be** his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall weigh out money according to the bride-price of the virgins.*

"And if a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife." Betrothed means formally promised in marriage, which in Israel was almost as binding as marriage itself. A bride-price was a gift paid to the bride's family.

In that culture, a young woman who had been seduced would find it very hard to marry. This law made the man take responsibility. He could not use her and walk away. He had to pay the bride-price and offer to marry her. But "if her father utterly refuses to give her to him," the man still had to pay the full bride-price. The father, who knew the man and his daughter, could protect her from a bad marriage.

God's law took sexual sin seriously and protected the young woman. God's plan is for sex to be kept within marriage (Hebrews 13:4). Where that has been broken, Christ offers forgiveness and a new start to all who come to Him (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

**22:18-20** *You shall not let a sorceress live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. Whoever sacrifices to the gods, except to the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction.*

Three crimes are named that carried death.

"You shall not let a sorceress live." A sorceress practiced magic and tried to use spirits or occult powers. In the nations of Canaan, sorcery was tied to idolatry and sometimes child sacrifice (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). It was a direct attack on God's rule over Israel.

"Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death." This was practiced in some Canaanite worship. It twists God's design for people, made in His image.

"Whoever sacrifices to the gods, except to the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction." The Hebrew word is herem, the ban, meaning something set apart to God for destruction. To sacrifice to other gods was to break the first commandment, the very heart of the covenant.

These laws were for Israel as God's covenant nation, with God as its King, and they were carried out by its courts. The church does not put such people to death. Instead, the gospel calls them to repent and be saved. In Ephesus, those who had practiced magic burned their books when they came to Christ (Acts 19:19). But these laws show us that God takes the occult, sexual perversion and idolatry very seriously. Christians should have nothing to do with them.

**22:21-24** *And a sojourner you shall not mistreat, and you shall not oppress him; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Any widow and fatherless* ***child*** *you shall not afflict. If you surely afflict him,* ***then*** *if he surely cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger shall burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.*

"And a sojourner you shall not mistreat, and you shall not oppress him; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." A sojourner is a foreigner living among Israel. God reminded Israel of their own past. They knew what it was to be strangers in a land that did not want them. Leviticus 19:34 says, "you shall love him as yourself."

"Any widow and fatherless child you shall not afflict." Widows and orphans had no husband or father to protect them. They were the easiest people to take advantage of.

"If you surely afflict him, then if he surely cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry." The word surely is repeated three times. God takes the side of the weak. When no one else hears them, He does. The threat is fearful: "My anger shall burn, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Those who make widows and orphans suffer would see their own families suffer the same.

James says pure religion is "to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation" (James 1:27). How does your church treat the foreigner, the widow and the child without a father? God is watching.

**22:25-27** *If you lend money to My people, to the poor **who is** with you, you shall not be to him like a creditor; you shall not lay interest on him. If you surely take the cloak of your neighbor as a pledge, you shall return it to him by the time the sun goes **down**, for it **is** his only covering; it **is** his cloak for his skin. In what shall he lie down? And it shall be, when he cries out to Me, then I will hear, for I **am** gracious.*

"If you lend money to My people, to the poor who is with you, you shall not be to him like a creditor; you shall not lay interest on him." This is about loans to a poor Israelite in need, not business loans. A creditor here is a harsh lender who presses for payment. God says, Do not profit from your brother's need.

"If you surely take the cloak of your neighbor as a pledge, you shall return it to him by the time the sun goes down." A pledge was something given to guarantee a loan. A poor man's cloak was also his blanket at night. "In what shall he lie down?" Even a lender's rights had limits. Mercy came first.

"When he cries out to Me, then I will hear, for I am gracious." God is gracious, and He expects His people to be gracious. Jesus told us to "lend, expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6:35).

**22:28** *You shall not revile God, and a leader among your people you shall not curse.*

"You shall not revile God, and a leader among your people you shall not curse." To revile is to speak with contempt. Respect for God and respect for the leaders He allows go together.

Paul quoted this verse when he found he had spoken harshly to the high priest: "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people" (Acts 23:5). Peter tells us to honor the king (1 Peter 2:17). We may disagree with leaders, and sometimes we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But we are not to curse them. We are to pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

**22:29-31** *Your fullness and your juice you shall not delay **to offer**. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. Thus you shall do with your ox **and** with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me. And you shall be men of holiness to Me; and flesh torn in the field you shall not eat; you shall throw it to the dog.*

"Your fullness and your juice you shall not delay to offer." The fullness is the harvest of grain, and the juice is wine and oil. God was to get the first, not the leftovers, and they were not to put it off. "The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me." As 13:13 explained, the firstborn sons were redeemed, bought back, with a payment. They belonged to God because He spared them at the Passover.

Firstborn animals stayed with their mothers seven days, and on the eighth day were given to God. Even in this law, there is care for the mother animal.

"And you shall be men of holiness to Me; and flesh torn in the field you shall not eat; you shall throw it to the dog." An animal killed by a wild beast still had its blood in it, and God had forbidden eating blood (Genesis 9:4). Holiness reached even what they ate.

God's call to Israel was, Be holy, because I am holy (Leviticus 11:44). Peter repeats it for believers: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). We are not under Israel's food laws, which Christ fulfilled (Mark 7:19; Colossians 2:16-17). But the call to be set apart for God in every part of life has not changed.

## Chapter 22 Summary

A thief was to pay back four or five times for a slaughtered or sold animal, or double if the animal was found alive; if he could not pay, he was sold to work off the debt. A man defending his home at night was not guilty if a thief died, but in daylight he was. A man whose animals grazed another's field, or whose fire spread to another's grain, had to make it right. Laws covered goods left in someone's care, animals kept or borrowed, and cases with no witnesses, which were settled before God or by an oath. A man who seduced an unbetrothed virgin had to pay the bride-price and marry her unless her father refused. Sorcery, lying with an animal and sacrificing to other gods carried death. Israel was not to oppress the foreigner, the widow or the orphan, because God hears their cry, and was not to charge interest to the poor or keep a poor man's cloak overnight. They were not to revile God or curse a leader, were to give God their firstfruits and firstborn, and were to be holy.

## Chapter 22 Study Questions

1. Why did a thief have to pay back more than he took? (22:1, 4)

2. Why was there no guilt for striking a thief at night, but guilt in the daytime? (22:2-3)

3. What do the laws about grazing and fire teach about responsibility? (22:5-6)

4. How did the law protect a young woman who was seduced? (22:16-17)

5. Why do you think God names the foreigner, the widow and the orphan, and what does He promise to do when they cry out? (22:21-24)

6. What limits did God put on lending to the poor? (22:25-27)

7. How did Paul use verse 28 in Acts 23:5?

8. What did God mean by "you shall be men of holiness to Me," and how does 1 Peter 1:15-16 apply it to us? (22:31)

9. Is there anything you need to make right, something taken, broken or damaged, the way Zacchaeus did?

10. Who are the foreigners, widows and fatherless children in your community, and what is one thing you could do for them?

# Chapter 23: Justice, Sabbaths, and Feasts

## Scripture

**23:1-9** You shall not lift up a report of falsehood; do not put your hand with a wicked ***man*** to be a witness of violence. You shall not be after many to evil, and you shall not answer in a dispute, turning aside after many to pervert ***it***. And a poor ***man*** you shall not favor in his dispute. If you meet the ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its load, and you would refrain from leaving to him, you shall surely release ***it*** with him. You shall not turn aside the judgment of your needy ***man*** in his dispute. From a word of falsehood you shall be far; and the innocent and the righteous do not kill, for I will not justify the wicked. And a bribe you shall not take, for the bribe blinds the clear-sighted and perverts the words of the righteous. And a sojourner you shall not oppress; and you, you know the soul of the sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

**23:10-19** And six years you shall sow your land, and you shall gather its produce; and the seventh ***year*** you shall let it rest and leave it fallow, and the needy of your people shall eat, and what they leave the living things of the field shall eat. Thus you shall do to your vineyard ***and*** to your olive grove. Six days you shall do your works, and on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave and the sojourner may be refreshed. And in all that I have said to you, take heed; and the name of other gods you shall not mention; let it not be heard on your mouth. Three times you shall celebrate a festival to Me in the year. The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, just as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for in it you came out from Egypt; and they shall not appear ***before*** My face empty. And the Festival of the Harvest, the firstfruits of your works which you sow in the field; and the Festival of the Ingathering at the going out of the year, when you gather in your works from the field. Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD. You shall not sacrifice the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; and the fat of My festival shall not remain overnight until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring ***into*** the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

**23:20-33** Look, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Take heed before him and listen to his voice; do not embitter him, for he will not forgive your transgression; for My name ***is*** in him. For if you surely listen to his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My angel shall go before you and bring you to the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite, the Hivite and the Jebusite; and I will annihilate them. You shall not bow down to their gods, and you shall not be made to serve them, and you shall not do according to their works; for you shall utterly tear them down, and you shall surely shatter their pillars. And you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. There shall not be ***one*** miscarrying or barren in your land; the number of your days I will fulfill. My terror I will send before you, and I will throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will give all your enemies to you ***turning the*** neck. And I will send the hornet before you, and it shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the

Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become a desolation and the living things of the field become many against you. Little ***by*** little I will drive them out from before you, until you become fruitful and possess the land. And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River; for I will give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out from before you. You shall not make a covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me; for you will serve their gods, for it will become a snare to you."

## Chapter 23 Preview

The Book of the Covenant comes to its end. First God gives laws for honest justice: do not spread lies, do not follow the crowd into evil, do not take bribes, do not twist a case either for the rich or for the poor, and do not oppress the foreigner. He even tells Israel to help an enemy whose animal has wandered off or fallen under its load.

Then God gives Israel a rhythm of rest and worship: a Sabbath year for the land every seventh year, a Sabbath day every seventh day, and three yearly feasts, Unleavened Bread, Harvest and Ingathering, when every man was to appear before the LORD. The chapter ends with a promise. God will send His angel ahead of Israel to guard them and bring them into the land. He will drive out the nations little by little, and He warns Israel never to make a covenant with them or serve their gods.

## Chapter 23 Study

**23:1-3** *You shall not lift up a report of falsehood; do not put your hand with a wicked* ***man*** *to be a witness of violence. You shall not be after many to evil, and you shall not answer in a dispute, turning aside after many to pervert* ***it****. And a poor* ***man*** *you shall not favor in his dispute.*

"You shall not lift up a report of falsehood." This is the ninth commandment applied to everyday speech and to the courtroom. Spreading a false rumor is a kind of false witness. "Do not put your hand with a wicked man to be a witness of violence." Do not help a wicked person do harm by lying for him.

"You shall not be after many to evil." Do not follow the crowd when the crowd is wrong. In court, that meant a witness or judge should not go along with the majority to bend justice. It still applies. It is hard to stand alone when everyone else is going the wrong way. But a crowd cried out "Crucify Him," and the crowd was wrong.

"And a poor man you shall not favor in his dispute." We might expect God to say, Do not favor the rich. He says that elsewhere (Leviticus 19:15). Here He says do not favor the poor either. Justice must be blind to wealth, both ways. Feeling sorry for someone is not a reason to rule against the truth.

**23:4-5** *If you meet the ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its load, and you would refrain from leaving **it** to him, you shall surely release **it** with him.*

"If you meet the ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall surely return it to him." Not your friend's ox. Your enemy's.

"If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its load," do not walk past. "You shall surely release it with him." Work alongside him to get the animal up.

This is love for enemies, right here in the Law of Moses. Jesus taught, "love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you" (Matthew 5:44). Proverbs 25:21 says to feed an enemy who is hungry. Some people think the Old Testament teaches hatred and the New Testament teaches love. This verse shows that God's heart has always been the same. Is there someone who has hurt you whose "donkey" you could help lift this week?

**23:6-9** *You shall not turn aside the judgment of your needy **man** in his dispute. From a word of falsehood you shall be far; and the innocent and the righteous do not kill, for I will not justify the wicked. And a bribe you shall not take, for the bribe blinds the clear-sighted and perverts the words of the righteous. And a sojourner you shall not oppress; and you, you know the soul of the sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*

"You shall not turn aside the judgment of your needy man in his dispute." Verse 3 said not to favor the poor. This verse says not to cheat them either. The poor are easy to push aside because they cannot fight back.

"From a word of falsehood you shall be far; and the innocent and the righteous do not kill, for I will not justify the wicked." Stay far away from lies, especially lies that could get an innocent person condemned. God will not declare a guilty person righteous. That makes the gospel all the more wonderful. God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus (Romans 4:5), not by ignoring sin but because Christ paid for it (Romans 3:25-26).

"And a bribe you shall not take, for the bribe blinds the clear-sighted and perverts the words of the righteous." A bribe can make even a good and wise man blind. That is why Jethro said Israel's judges must hate unjust gain (18:21).

"And a sojourner you shall not oppress; and you, you know the soul of the sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." This repeats 22:21 with a tender twist: you know how it feels. God uses our own past suffering to make us kind to others who suffer.

**23:10-11** *And six years you shall sow your land, and you shall gather its produce; and the seventh* ***year*** *you shall let it rest and leave it fallow, and the needy of your people shall eat, and what they leave the living things of the field shall eat. Thus you shall do to your vineyard* ***and*** *to your olive grove.*

"Six years you shall sow your land, and you shall gather its produce; and the seventh year you shall let it rest and leave it fallow." Fallow means left unplanted. Every seventh year, the land itself was to have a Sabbath. Leviticus 25:1-7 gives more detail.

Why? Look at who benefits: "the needy of your people shall eat, and what they leave the living things of the field shall eat." Whatever grew on its own was free for the poor and for wild animals. The land rested, the poor were fed, and Israel learned to trust God to provide. Leviticus 25:20-22 promises that God would give a big enough harvest in the sixth year to carry them through.

Sadly, Israel did not keep these Sabbath years. Second Chronicles 36:21 says the seventy years of exile in Babylon let the land enjoy its Sabbaths at last.

**23:12-13** *Six days you shall do your works, and on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave and the sojourner may be refreshed. And in all that I have said to you, take heed; and the name of other gods you shall not mention; let it not be heard on your mouth.*

"Six days you shall do your works, and on the seventh day you shall rest." The weekly Sabbath is repeated, and here the reason is mercy: "so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave and the sojourner may be refreshed." The ones with the least power, servants, foreigners and animals, were the ones God named.

The Sabbath was a gift of rest to the weary. The New Testament does not bind Christians to keep the seventh day as Israel did (Colossians 2:16-17), and believers hold different views on how it applies now, as we saw at 20:8-11. But God's concern here is plain. Those who work for us need rest too. Are we fair to the people whose work serves us?

"And in all that I have said to you, take heed; and the name of other gods you shall not mention; let it not be heard on your mouth." Israel was not to call on other gods in prayer or swear by them. The name of the LORD alone was to be on their lips.

**23:14-17** *Three times you shall celebrate a festival to Me in the year. The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, just as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for in it you came out from Egypt; and they shall not appear* ***before*** *My face empty. And the Festival of the Harvest, the firstfruits of your works which you sow in the field; and the Festival of the Ingathering at the going out of the year, when you gather in your works from the field. Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD.*

"Three times you shall celebrate a festival to Me in the year." These three feasts were the heart of Israel's year of worship. All three were tied to the harvest and to God's saving acts.

First, "the Festival of Unleavened Bread," for seven days, "at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for in it you came out from Egypt." Abib is the first month, in spring. Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast. This feast came right after Passover and recalled the night they left Egypt in haste (12:15-20). Paul writes, "our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:7). "They shall not appear before My face empty." They were to bring an offering.

Second, "the Festival of the Harvest, the firstfruits of your works." This came at the wheat harvest, fifty days later. It was later called the Feast of Weeks, and in Greek, Pentecost. On that day, many years later, God poured out the Holy Spirit on the first believers (Acts 2:1-4), and about three thousand were saved, the firstfruits of the church.

Third, "the Festival of the Ingathering at the going out of the year," at the end of the harvest in the fall. It was later called the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, when Israel lived in booths to remember the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42-43). On the last day of that feast Jesus cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37). Zechariah 14:16 says the nations will one day go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Booths in Christ's kingdom.

"Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD." Three times a year, the men of Israel came before Him. God wanted His people to stop, gather and remember.

**23:18-19** *You shall not sacrifice the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; and the fat of My festival shall not remain overnight until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring* ***into*** *the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.*

"You shall not sacrifice the blood of My sacrifice with leaven." Leaven is yeast. At Passover especially, no leaven was to be in the house, and in Scripture leaven often pictures sin spreading (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). "The fat of My festival shall not remain overnight until morning." The best part belonged to God and was to be offered at once.

"The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God." The best and the first went to God. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your yield." Do we give God the first, or what is left over?

"You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother." This rule is repeated in 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21. We do not know for sure why it was given. Some think it was a pagan practice used in fertility rites. Others think it was meant to teach respect for the bond between mother and young, like the law of the seven days in 22:30. Later Jewish tradition built from it the rule of not eating meat and milk together. What is clear is that God's people were to be different from the nations, even in the kitchen.

**23:20-23** *Look, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Take heed before him and listen to his voice; do not embitter him, for he will not forgive your transgression; for My name **is** in him. For if you surely listen to his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My angel shall go before you and bring you to the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite, the Hivite and the Jebusite; and I will annihilate them.*

"Look, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared." The word angel means messenger. God would not leave Israel to find their own way.

"Take heed before him and listen to his voice; do not embitter him, for he will not forgive your transgression; for My name is in him." This is no ordinary angel. He can forgive or not forgive sin, which only God can do (Mark 2:7). And God's own name is in him. Many Bible teachers believe this is the angel of the LORD, the Son of God before He was born as a man, as at the burning bush (3:2-6). Others believe he is a created angel who carries God's full authority. Either way, to obey him was to obey God.

"If you surely listen to his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries." Then God names the nations of Canaan: "the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite, the Hivite and the Jebusite; and I will annihilate them."

**23:24-26** *You shall not bow down to their gods, and you shall not be made to serve them, and you shall not do according to their works; for you shall utterly tear them down, and you shall surely shatter their pillars. And you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. There shall not be **one** miscarrying or barren in your land; the number of your days I will fulfill.*

"You shall not bow down to their gods, and you shall not be made to serve them, and you shall not do according to their works; for you shall utterly tear them down, and you shall surely shatter their pillars." The pillars were sacred stones set up in the worship of Canaanite gods. Israel was not to borrow their worship or blend it with the worship of the LORD. They were to destroy it.

"And you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst." Then a remarkable promise: "There shall not be one miscarrying or barren in your land; the number of your days I will fulfill."

These were covenant blessings given to Israel in the land, tied to their faithfulness (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). They are not a promise to each Christian that we will never be sick or never lose a child. Godly people in Scripture, like Hannah, waited long for children. But these words show God's good heart toward His people, and they look ahead to a day when there will be no more death or pain (Revelation 21:4).

**23:27-30** *My terror I will send before you, and I will throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will give all your enemies to you* ***turning the*** *neck. And I will send the hornet before you, and it shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become a desolation and the living things of the field become many against you. Little* ***by*** *little I will drive them out from before you, until you become fruitful and possess the land.*

"My terror I will send before you, and I will throw into confusion all the people among whom you come." The news of the sea had already made the nations afraid (15:14-16).

"I will send the hornet before you." Joshua 24:12 says God sent the hornet, "not by your sword and not by your bow." Some take this as real hornets, some as a picture of the panic God sent. Either way, God fought for Israel.

"I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become a desolation and the living things of the field become many against you. Little by little I will drive them out." God had a wise plan. Israel was not yet large enough to fill the land. If the land were emptied at once, wild animals would take over.

God often works little by little in our lives too. We want every sin gone and every battle won at once. But God, in His wisdom, gives growth over time (Philippians 1:6).

Why did God drive out these nations? Genesis 15:16 said He waited four hundred years because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." Deuteronomy 9:5 says it was not because of Israel's righteousness, but "for the wickedness of these nations." Their worship included child sacrifice and gross immorality (Leviticus 18:24-28; Deuteronomy 12:31). God's judgment came after centuries of patience.

**23:31-33** *And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River; for I will give into your hand the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out from before you. You shall not make a covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me; for you will serve their gods, for it will become a snare to you."*

"I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River." The Sea of the Philistines is the Mediterranean. The River is the Euphrates. This matches the promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18). Israel came closest to these borders under David and Solomon (1 Kings 4:21). Many believe it will be fully fulfilled in Christ's future kingdom.

"You shall not make a covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me; for you will serve their gods, for it will become a snare to you." A snare is a trap. God knew His people's hearts. If they lived side by side with idol worshipers and made treaties with them, they would end up worshiping their gods. That is exactly what happened in the days of the judges (Judges 2:1-3, 11-13).

The lesson for us is not to hate people, but to guard our hearts from what draws us away from God. Paul says, "Do not be overcome by the evil, but overcome the evil with the good" (Romans 12:21), and John warns, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

## Chapter 23 Summary

God commanded Israel not to spread false reports or join the wicked as false witnesses, not to follow the crowd into evil, and not to favor the poor or deny them justice. They were to return an enemy's lost animal and help lift an enemy's fallen donkey. They were to stay far from lies, never put the innocent to death, refuse bribes, and not oppress the foreigner, since they had been foreigners in Egypt. Every seventh year the land was to rest so the poor and the wild animals could eat, and every seventh day was to be a day of rest, even for servants, foreigners and animals. Israel was to keep three yearly feasts: Unleavened Bread, Harvest and Ingathering, and every man was to appear before the LORD. God promised to send His angel, who carried His name, to guard them and bring them into the land. If they obeyed, He would bless them, drive out the nations little by little, and set their borders from the Red Sea to the Euphrates. They were to make no covenant with the nations or their gods, or it would become a snare.

## Chapter 23 Study Questions

1. Why does God warn against following the crowd? (23:2)

2. Why do you think God says not to favor even the poor in a dispute? (23:3, 6)

3. What were Israelites to do when they found an enemy's ox or donkey in trouble? (23:4-5)

4. Who benefited from the Sabbath year and the weekly Sabbath? (23:11-12)

5. Name the three yearly feasts, and how each one points to Christ or to God's future plan. (23:14-17)

6. What made the angel of verses 20-21 different from an ordinary messenger?

7. Why did God drive out the nations "little by little"? (23:29-30)

8. Why was Israel told not to make a covenant with the nations or their gods? (23:32-33)

9. Is there a "crowd" around you that pulls you toward something wrong? How can you stand firm?

10. Where in your life do you need God's patience to work "little by little," and how can you trust Him with that?

# Chapter 24: The Covenant Confirmed

## Scripture

**24:1-8** And to Moses He said, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall bow down from a distance. And Moses alone shall draw near to the LORD, and they shall not draw near; and the people shall not come up with him." And Moses came, and he recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments; and all the people answered ***with*** one voice, and they said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and he built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent the young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings, and they sacrificed sacrifices, peace offerings to the LORD, bulls. And Moses took half of the blood, and he put ***it*** in the bowls; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and he read ***it*** in the ears of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will obey." And Moses took the blood, and he sprinkled ***it*** on the people, and he said, "Look, the blood of the covenant which the LORD has cut with you concerning all these words."

**24:9-18** And Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet ***was*** like a work of a pavement of sapphire, and like the substance of the heavens for purity. And against the nobles of the sons of Israel He did not stretch out His hand; and they gazed on God, and they ate and they drank. And the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me to the mountain, and be there, and let Me give you the tablets of stone, and the law and the commandment which I have written to teach them." And Moses arose, and Joshua his attendant; and Moses went up to the mountain of God. And to the elders he said, "Remain for us in this ***place*** until we return to you; and look, Aaron and Hur ***are*** with you. Whoever has matters shall draw near to them." And Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of the LORD dwelt on the mountain of Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and He called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of the LORD ***was*** like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain to the eyes of the sons of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

## Chapter 24 Preview

God has spoken the Ten Commandments and the laws of the Book of the Covenant. Now the covenant is sealed. Moses tells the people all the LORD's words, and they answer with one voice, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do." Moses writes the words down, builds an altar with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes, and has young men offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. He sprinkles half the blood on the altar, reads the book of the covenant to the people, and then sprinkles the rest of the blood on them: "Look, the blood of the covenant."

Then Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders go up the mountain. They see the God of Israel, with something like a pavement of sapphire under His feet, and they eat and drink in His presence. Finally Moses goes up into the cloud with Joshua. The glory of the LORD

looks like a consuming fire on the mountaintop, and Moses stays there forty days and forty nights. The blood of this covenant points ahead to the blood of Jesus, which seals the new covenant.

## Chapter 24 Study

**24:1-2** *And to Moses He said, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall bow down from a distance. And Moses alone shall draw near to the LORD, and they shall not draw near; and the people shall not come up with him."*

"Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall bow down from a distance." These words were likely given while Moses was on the mountain in 20:21, before he came down to tell the people in verse 3.

Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's two oldest sons, who would become priests. The seventy elders stood for the whole nation. They could come part of the way, but they were to "bow down from a distance." Worship begins with humble reverence.

"Moses alone shall draw near to the LORD." There were levels of nearness. The people stayed below, the leaders came part way up, and only Moses went all the way. This pattern will show up again in the tabernacle: the people in the courtyard, the priests in the Holy Place, and only the high priest in the Most Holy Place. Through Christ, every believer can now draw near (Hebrews 10:19-22).

**24:3** *And Moses came, and he recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments; and all the people answered **with** one voice, and they said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do."*

"Moses came, and he recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments." He told them the Ten Commandments and the laws of chapters 21 to 23.

"All the people answered with one voice," and they said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do." They had said almost the same in 19:8. They were sincere. But promises made in our own strength do not hold. In forty days they would break the first and second commandments with the golden calf.

That is not a reason to make no promises to God. It is a reason to know that we need more than our own promises. We need God to change our hearts. That is what the new covenant promises: God writing His law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10).

**24:4-5** *And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and he built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent the young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings, and they sacrificed sacrifices, peace offerings to the LORD, bulls.*

"Moses wrote all the words of the LORD." The covenant was put in writing, so it could be read and kept. This is one more sign that Moses wrote down what God gave him.

"He rose early in the morning, and he built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel." The altar stood for God. The twelve pillars stood for the twelve tribes. Both sides of the covenant were present.

"He sent the young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered up burnt offerings, and they sacrificed sacrifices, peace offerings to the LORD, bulls." The Levitical priests had not been set apart yet, so young men did this work. Burnt offerings were wholly given to God and spoke of total dedication. Peace offerings were shared in a meal and spoke of fellowship with God. Both were needed to seal the covenant.

**24:6-8** *And Moses took half of the blood, and he put **it** in the bowls; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and he read **it** in the ears of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will obey." And Moses took the blood, and he sprinkled **it** on the people, and he said, "Look, the blood of the covenant which the LORD has cut with you concerning all these words."*

"Moses took half of the blood, and he put it in the bowls; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." Blood stands for a life given. The blood on the altar was given to God.

Then "he took the book of the covenant, and he read it in the ears of the people." They answered, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will obey." For the third time, the people promised.

"And Moses took the blood, and he sprinkled it on the people." Then he said, "Look, the blood of the covenant which the LORD has cut with you concerning all these words." Covenants were often said to be cut, because they were sealed with the death of an animal (compare Genesis 15:9-18). The blood bound God and the people together. It also carried a warning: to break this covenant was a matter of life and death.

Hebrews 9:18-22 looks back on this day. It says that even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood, and "apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

On the night before He died, Jesus took the cup and said, "this is My blood, the blood of the new covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). He used the words of Moses on purpose. The blood of bulls sealed the old covenant. The blood of Christ seals the new one. Peter says believers are chosen "for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). Every time we take the Lord's Supper, we remember that we belong to God through His blood.

**24:9-11** *And Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet **was** like a work of a pavement of sapphire, and like the substance of the heavens for purity. And against the nobles of the sons of Israel He did not stretch out His hand; and they gazed on God, and they ate and they drank.*

"Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel."

What did they see? Moses is careful. He does not describe God Himself. He describes what was under His feet: "like a work of a pavement of sapphire, and like the substance of the heavens for purity." Sapphire is a deep blue stone. It was as clear and bright as the sky. Ezekiel saw something like this when he saw the throne of God (Ezekiel 1:26).

How could they see God? Later God told Moses, "man shall not see Me and live" (33:20), and John says, "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18). They did not see God in all His glory. They saw a vision or form of Him that He allowed them to see. John 1:18 goes on to say that the only begotten Son "has made Him known." Many believe that whenever God was seen in the Old Testament, it was the Son who showed Himself.

"Against the nobles of the sons of Israel He did not stretch out His hand." They expected to die. Instead, God welcomed them. "They gazed on God, and they ate and they drank." The covenant was sealed with a meal in God's presence. Eating together was a sign of peace and friendship.

This is a picture of what God wants with His people: fellowship at His table. Jesus gave His church a meal to remember Him, and He promises a greater one, "the supper of the marriage of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

It is sobering to remember that Nadab and Abihu, who ate with God on this mountain, later died for offering strange fire before the LORD (Leviticus 10:1-2). Being close to holy things does not guarantee a holy heart.

**24:12-14** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me to the mountain, and be there, and let Me give you the tablets of stone, and the law and the commandment which I have written to teach them." And Moses arose, and Joshua his attendant; and Moses went up to the mountain of God. And to the elders he said, "Remain for us in this* ***place*** *until we return to you; and look, Aaron and Hur* ***are*** *with you. Whoever has matters shall draw near to them."*

"Come up to Me to the mountain, and be there, and let Me give you the tablets of stone, and the law and the commandment which I have written to teach them." God Himself would write the Ten Commandments on stone. Notice the purpose: "to teach them." God's law is given to teach us His ways.

"Moses arose, and Joshua his attendant." Joshua went with Moses partway up. He was being trained for the day he would lead.

To the elders Moses said, "Remain for us in this place until we return to you; and look, Aaron and Hur are with you." Aaron and Hur, who held up Moses' hands against Amalek (17:12), were left in charge. Sadly, while Moses was gone, Aaron would give in to the people and make the golden calf (32:1-6). Leaders are tested most when no one seems to be watching.

**24:15-18** *And Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of the LORD dwelt on the mountain of Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and He called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of the LORD* ***was*** *like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain to the eyes of the sons of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*

"Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of the LORD dwelt on the mountain of Sinai." The word dwelt is linked to the later Hebrew word shekinah, often used for God's glory living among His people.

"The cloud covered it six days; and He called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud." Moses waited six days before God spoke. Waiting on God is part of meeting with Him.

"And the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain to the eyes of the sons of Israel." From below, the people saw what looked like fire on the mountaintop. And Moses walked into it.

"Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights." Deuteronomy 9:9 says he ate no bread and drank no water. During these forty days God showed him the pattern for the tabernacle and the priesthood, which fills chapters 25 to 31. Jesus also fasted forty days and forty nights before He began His ministry (Matthew 4:2).

The God whose glory was a consuming fire on Sinai is the God who came to live among us in Christ. John says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14). Do you come to Him with both reverence and joy?

## Chapter 24 Summary

God called Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders to come up and worship from a distance, while only Moses would draw near. Moses told the people all the LORD's words and laws, and they answered with one voice that they would do them. Moses wrote down the words, built an altar and twelve pillars for the tribes, and had young men offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. He sprinkled half the blood on the altar, read the book of the covenant to the people, who promised again to obey, and sprinkled the rest of the blood on them, saying, "Look, the blood of the covenant." Then the leaders went up and saw the God of Israel, with something like a sapphire pavement under His feet. God did not harm them, and they ate and drank before Him. God called Moses up to receive the stone tablets. Moses went with Joshua, leaving Aaron and Hur in charge. The cloud covered the mountain for six days, the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire, and on the seventh day Moses entered the cloud and stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

## Chapter 24 Study Questions

1. Who was invited up the mountain, and how close could each group come? (24:1-2)

2. What did the people promise, and how many times did they say it in chapters 19 and 24? (19:8; 24:3, 7)

3. What did the altar and the twelve pillars stand for? (24:4)

4. What two things did Moses sprinkle with blood, and what did he say? (24:6-8)

5. How did Jesus use the words of verse 8 at the Last Supper? (Matthew 26:28)

6. What did the leaders see when they saw the God of Israel, and what did they do there? (24:10-11)

7. How do John 1:18 and Exodus 33:20 help us understand verses 10-11?

8. What did the glory of the LORD look like to the people below, and how long did Moses stay on the mountain? (24:17-18)

9. Israel promised to obey and soon failed. What does that teach you about relying on your own promises, and where do you need God's help instead?

10. How can remembering "the blood of the covenant" change the way you come to the Lord's Supper?

# Chapter 25: The Ark, the Table, and the Lampstand

## Scripture

**25:1-9** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take for Me a contribution; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My contribution. And this ***is*** the contribution which you shall take from them: gold and silver and bronze, and blue and purple and crimson scarlet, and fine linen and goats' ***hair***, and skins of rams dyed red, and skins of dolphins, and acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances, onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst. According to all that I am showing you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its articles, so you shall make ***it***.

**25:10-22** And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) ***shall be*** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it ***with*** pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make on it a molding of gold all around. And you shall cast for it four rings of gold, and you shall put ***them*** on its four feet, and two rings on its one side, and two rings on its second side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them ***with*** gold. And you shall bring the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark by them. In the rings of the ark the poles shall be; they shall not be removed from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I will give to you. And you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) ***shall be*** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; ***of*** hammered work you shall make them, from the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub from the end on this ***side***, and one cherub from the end on that ***side***; from the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim shall be spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces ***shall be*** each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat the faces of the cherubim shall be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark from above, and into the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which ***are*** on the ark of the testimony, all that I will command you concerning the sons of Israel.

**25:23-40** And you shall make a table of acacia wood: approximately 3 feet (two cubits) ***shall be*** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it ***with*** pure gold, and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. And you shall make for it a rim of approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth) all around, and you shall make a molding of gold for its rim all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and you shall put the rings on the four corners which ***belong*** to its four feet. Close to the rim the rings shall be, for housings for poles to carry the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them ***with*** gold, and the table shall be carried by them. And you shall make its dishes and its pans and its jugs and its bowls, with which ***drink offerings*** shall be poured out; ***of*** pure gold you shall make them. And you shall put on the table bread of ***the***

Presence before Me continually. And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold; ***of*** hammered work the lampstand shall be made; its base and its shaft, its cups, its bulbs, and its blossoms shall be from it. And six branches ***shall be*** coming out from its sides: three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its second side; three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; and three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; so for the six branches which come out from the lampstand. And on the lampstand ***shall be*** four cups, almond-shaped, its bulbs and its blossoms; and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, for the six branches which come out from the lampstand. Their bulbs and their branches shall be from it; all of it ***shall be*** one hammered work of pure gold. And you shall make its lamps, seven; and he shall lift up its lamps, and he shall give light on the side in front of it. And its tongs and its fire pans ***shall be of*** pure gold. ***Of*** approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of pure gold he shall make it, ***with*** all these articles. And see, and make ***them*** by their pattern which you are being shown on the mountain.

## Chapter 25 Preview

Moses is on the mountain for forty days, and God now tells him what He wants Israel to build: a sanctuary, so that He may live among them. This begins seven chapters (25 to 31) of plans for the tabernacle, a portable tent of worship, along with its furniture and its priests. Chapters 35 to 40 will tell how it was built. God starts by asking for a freewill offering from everyone whose heart is willing.

Then God begins at the center, with the most holy object of all: the ark of the covenant, a gold-covered chest that would hold the tablets of the law, with a gold lid called the mercy seat and two golden cherubim. There God would meet with Moses. Next comes the table for the bread of the Presence, and the golden lampstand with seven lamps. Many of the details are measurements. I will group them and point to what they teach. Hebrews tells us that the tabernacle was "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5), and each piece points us to Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 25 Study

**25:1-7** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take for Me a contribution; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My contribution. And this **is** the contribution which you shall take from them: gold and silver and bronze, and blue and purple and crimson scarlet, and fine linen and goats' **hair**, and skins of rams dyed red, and skins of dolphins, and acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances, onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.*

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take for Me a contribution; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My contribution." The tabernacle would be built from gifts, not taxes. God wanted only what was given freely. Paul says the same of Christian giving: "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

God listed what He wanted: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and crimson yarn; fine linen and goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red and skins of dolphins (others translate this rare word as fine leather or sea cow hides); acacia wood, a hard desert wood that resists rot; oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and incense; and onyx and other precious stones for the high priest's clothes.

Where did former slaves get gold and fine cloth in the desert? From the Egyptians, who gave them silver, gold and clothing on the night they left (12:35-36). God had provided for His house before He asked for it. What we give to God was His gift to us first.

**25:8-9** *And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst. According to all that I am showing you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its articles, so you shall make* ***it****.*

"And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst." This is the heart of the whole section. A sanctuary is a holy place. God did not want to stay on top of a mountain far from His people. He wanted to live among them. In Genesis, God walked with Adam in the garden. Sin broke that. Now the holy God would come and camp in the middle of a sinful people, in a tent like theirs.

The word tabernacle means a dwelling or tent. John uses the same idea for Jesus: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Greek word means He pitched His tent among us. And at the end of the Bible a loud voice says that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them (Revelation 21:3).

"According to all that I am showing you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its articles, so you shall make it." Moses did not design the tabernacle. God showed him a pattern. Hebrews 8:5 quotes this command and explains that the tabernacle was a copy of the true one in heaven, where Christ now serves as our High Priest (Hebrews 9:24). We do not get to invent our own way to God. He shows us the way.

**25:10-16** *And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half)* ***shall be*** *its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it* ***with*** *pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make on it a molding of gold all around. And you shall cast for it four rings of gold, and you shall put* ***them*** *on its four feet, and two rings on its one side, and two rings on its second side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them* ***with*** *gold. And you shall bring the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark by them. In the rings of the ark the poles shall be; they shall not be removed from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I will give to you.*

"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood." An ark is a chest or box. This was the ark of the covenant, about three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches wide and high. A cubit was about eighteen inches, the length from a man's elbow to his fingertips. It was overlaid with pure gold inside and out, with a gold molding around the top.

Four gold rings on its feet held two poles of acacia wood covered with gold. "In the rings of the ark the poles shall be; they shall not be removed from it." The ark was always ready to move, because God was traveling with His people. It was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites, not touched by hand. Later Uzzah died when he reached out to steady it (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

"You shall put into the ark the testimony which I will give to you." The testimony is the two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, God's witness to His covenant. Hebrews 9:4 says the ark later also held the jar of manna and Aaron's staff that budded.

Many have seen in the acacia wood covered with gold a picture of Christ, fully human and fully God. The New Testament does not say that about the ark, so I offer it only as a picture. But Christ is the One in whose heart God's law was perfectly kept (Psalm 40:8).

**25:17-22** *And you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) **shall be** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; **of** hammered work you shall make them, from the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub from the end on this **side**, and one cherub from the end on that **side**; from the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim shall be spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces **shall be** each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat the faces of the cherubim shall be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark from above, and into the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which **are** on the ark of the testimony, all that I will command you concerning the sons of Israel.*

"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold." The mercy seat was the lid of the ark, the same length and width, made of solid gold. The Hebrew word, kapporet, comes from the word for atonement, to cover sin and make peace with God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled blood on it for the sins of the nation (Leviticus 16:14-15).

"You shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them, from the two ends of the mercy seat." Cherubim are powerful angelic beings who guard God's holiness. Cherubim guarded the way to the tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:24). Here they faced each other, wings spread over the mercy seat, looking down toward it.

Think about the picture. Inside the ark was the law that Israel had broken. Above it was the throne of the holy God. Between them was the mercy seat, where the blood was sprinkled. When God looked down at His broken law, He saw it through the blood. That is how a holy God can show mercy to sinners.

The New Testament makes the link plain. Hebrews 9:5 calls it "the mercy seat." Paul uses the same Greek word when he says God set forth Christ "as a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25). A propitiation is a sacrifice that turns away God's anger by paying for sin. Jesus is our mercy seat. "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2).

"And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim." This was the place where God met His people. Today we meet God through Christ. "Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy" (Hebrews 4:16).

**25:23-30** *And you shall make a table of acacia wood: approximately 3 feet (two cubits)* ***shall be*** *its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it* ***with*** *pure gold, and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. And you shall make for it a rim of approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth) all around, and you shall make a molding of gold for its rim all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and you shall put the rings on the four corners which* ***belong*** *to its four feet. Close to the rim the rings shall be, for housings for poles to carry the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them* ***with*** *gold, and the table shall be carried by them. And you shall make its dishes and its pans and its jugs and its bowls, with which* ***drink offerings*** *shall be poured out;* ***of*** *pure gold you shall make them. And you shall put on the table bread of* ***the*** *Presence before Me continually.*

"You shall make a table of acacia wood," about three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and two feet three inches high, overlaid with pure gold, with a gold rim about a handbreadth wide (three inches) and a gold molding. It too had four gold rings and two gold-covered poles for carrying. Its dishes, pans, jugs and bowls for drink offerings were all of pure gold.

"And you shall put on the table bread of the Presence before Me continually." Twelve loaves were set out, one for each tribe (Leviticus 24:5-9), and replaced each Sabbath. The bread stood "before Me," in God's presence. It was a sign that God provided for His people and that the twelve tribes were always before Him in fellowship.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Just as the manna and the bread of the Presence fed Israel, Christ gives Himself to feed His people. The bread was never taken away. Neither is Christ's provision for us.

**25:31-40** *And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold; **of** hammered work the lampstand shall be made; its base and its shaft, its cups, its bulbs, and its blossoms shall be from it. And six branches **shall be** coming out from its sides: three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its second side; three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; and three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; so for the six branches which come out from the lampstand. And on the lampstand **shall be** four cups, almond-shaped, its bulbs and its blossoms; and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, for the six branches which come out from the lampstand. Their bulbs and their branches shall be from it; all of it **shall be** one hammered work of pure gold. And you shall make its lamps, seven; and he shall lift up its lamps, and he shall give light on the side in front of it. And its tongs and its fire pans **shall be of** pure gold. **Of** approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of pure gold he shall make it, **with** all these articles. And see, and make **them** by their pattern which you are being shown on the mountain.*

"You shall make a lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work the lampstand shall be made." The lampstand was beaten out of one piece of gold, with a center shaft and six branches, three on each side. Each branch had cups shaped like almond blossoms, with bulbs and flowers, and the center shaft had four. It looked like a small, golden almond tree in bloom. It took about seventy-five pounds of pure gold, a talent, to make it and its tools.

"You shall make its lamps, seven," to "give light on the side in front of it." The Holy Place had no windows. Without the lampstand, the priests would work in the dark. The lamps burned olive oil and were to be kept burning (27:20-21).

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. The one following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). The only light in God's house came from the lampstand. The only true light in our world comes from Christ. He also said to His followers, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14), and in Revelation 1:20 the seven golden lampstands are the churches. Our light is borrowed from Him.

"And see, and make them by their pattern which you are being shown on the mountain." God repeats it: build it My way. Hebrews 8:5 quotes this verse. The tabernacle was a shadow, a God-given picture, "not the very image of the things" (Hebrews 10:1). Christ is the reality the shadow pointed to.

## Chapter 25 Summary

God told Moses to ask the people for a freewill offering of gold, silver, bronze, colored yarn, fine linen, goats' hair, skins, acacia wood, oil, spices and precious stones, so that they could make Him a sanctuary and He could dwell among them, following the pattern He showed Moses. He described the ark of the covenant, a chest of acacia wood covered with gold, carried with gold-covered poles that were never removed, to hold the tablets of the testimony. On top was the mercy seat of pure gold with two golden cherubim facing each other, wings spread over it, where God would meet with Moses and speak to him. Next was a gold-covered table with gold dishes, where the bread of the Presence was always set before the LORD. Last was a lampstand of pure

hammered gold, with six branches decorated like almond blossoms and seven lamps to give light, made from a talent of gold. God told Moses to make everything by the pattern shown to him on the mountain.

## Chapter 25 Study Questions

1. How was the tabernacle to be paid for, and what kind of giving did God want? (25:2)

2. Why did God want Israel to build a sanctuary? (25:8)

3. Why did Moses have to follow the pattern exactly, and what does Hebrews 8:5 say the pattern was? (25:9, 40)

4. What was kept inside the ark, and why were the poles never to be removed? (25:15-16)

5. What was the mercy seat, and what happened there on the Day of Atonement? (25:17-22; Leviticus 16:14-15)

6. How do Romans 3:25 and 1 John 2:2 show that Jesus is our mercy seat?

7. What was placed on the table, and what does it say about God and His people? (25:30)

8. What was the purpose of the lampstand, and how does Jesus fulfill it? (25:37; John 8:12)

9. God gave Israel gold before He asked for it. What has God given you that you could give back to Him gladly?

10. God's great desire was to dwell among His people. How does it change your day to know that, through Christ, God wants to be near you?

# Chapter 26: The Tabernacle

## Scripture

**26:1-14** And the tabernacle you shall make ***with*** ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; ***with*** cherubim, the work of a designer, you shall make them. The length of the one curtain ***shall be*** approximately 42 feet (twenty-eight by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for all the curtains. Five of the curtains shall be joined each to its fellow, and five curtains joined each to its fellow. And you shall make loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain, at the end in the set; and so you shall do on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second coupling. Fifty loops you shall make on the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make at the end of the curtain which ***is*** in the second coupling, the loops being opposite each to its fellow. And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and you shall join the curtains each to its fellow with the clasps; and the tabernacle shall be one. And you shall make curtains of goats' ***hair*** for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains you shall make them. The length of the one curtain ***shall be*** approximately 45 feet (thirty by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for the eleven curtains. And you shall join five of the curtains by themselves and six of the curtains by themselves, and you shall fold double the sixth curtain at the front of the face of the tent. And you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain, the outermost in the set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain of the second set. And you shall make clasps of bronze, fifty, and you shall bring the clasps into the loops, and you shall join the tent, and it shall be one. And the overhang that remains in the curtains of the tent, the half of the curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. And approximately 18 inches (the cubit) on this ***side*** and approximately 18 inches (the cubit) on that ***side***, in what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall be hanging over the sides of the tabernacle on this ***side*** and on that ***side***, to cover it. And you shall make a covering for the tent ***of*** skins of rams dyed red, and a covering of skins of dolphins from above.

**26:15-30** And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle ***of*** acacia wood, standing upright. Approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) ***shall be*** the length of the board, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and the half of the cubit) the breadth of the one board. Two tenons ***shall be*** for the one board, fitted each to its fellow; so you shall do for all the boards of the tabernacle. And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the side of the south, southward. And you shall make forty bases of silver under the twenty boards: two bases under the one board for its two tenons, and two bases under the one board for its two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle, for the north side, twenty boards, and their forty bases ***of*** silver: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board. And for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six boards. And two boards you shall make for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. And they shall be doubled from below, and together they shall be complete at its top to the one ring; so it shall be for both of them; they shall be for the two corners. And there shall be eight boards, and their bases ***of*** silver, sixteen bases: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board. And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for

the boards of the side of the tabernacle for the rear, westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards ***shall be*** passing through from end to end. And the boards you shall overlay ***with*** gold, and their rings you shall make ***of*** gold, housings for the bars; and you shall overlay the bars ***with*** gold. And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown on the mountain.

**26:31-37** And you shall make a veil ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he shall make it, ***with*** cherubim. And you shall put it on four pillars of acacia overlaid ***with*** gold, their hooks ***of*** gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall put the veil under the clasps, and you shall bring there, inside the veil, the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall separate for you between the holy place and the holy of holies. And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies. And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand opposite the table on the side of the tabernacle southward; and the table you shall put on the north side. And you shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and you shall overlay them ***with*** gold, their hooks ***of*** gold; and you shall cast for them five bases of bronze.

## Chapter 26 Preview

Chapter 25 described the furniture. Chapter 26 describes the house that would hold it: the tabernacle itself. It was a tent made of four layers of coverings stretched over a frame of gold-covered boards standing on silver bases. The inner layer was beautiful linen, woven in blue, purple and scarlet with cherubim. Over it came goats' hair, then rams' skins dyed red, then a tough outer covering.

Inside, a veil woven with cherubim divided the tent into two rooms: the Holy Place, with the table and the lampstand, and the Most Holy Place, called the holy of holies, where the ark and the mercy seat stood. A screen hung at the entrance. This chapter is full of measurements, so I will group them and point to the main lessons. The veil especially points to Christ. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two, and the way into God's presence was opened (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19-20).

## Chapter 26 Study

**26:1-6** *And the tabernacle you shall make **with** ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; **with** cherubim, the work of a designer, you shall make them. The length of the one curtain **shall be** approximately 42 feet (twenty-eight by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for all the curtains. Five of the curtains shall be joined each to its fellow, and five curtains joined each to its fellow. And you shall make loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain, at the end in the set; and so you shall do on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second coupling. Fifty loops you shall make on the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make at the end of the curtain which **is** in the second coupling, the loops being opposite each to its fellow. And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and you shall join the curtains each to its fellow with the clasps; and the tabernacle shall be one.*

"The tabernacle you shall make with ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; with cherubim, the work of a designer." This was the innermost layer, the ceiling and walls that the priests would see from inside. It was made of the finest materials, woven with images of cherubim, the angels who guard God's holiness.

Each curtain was about forty-two feet long and six feet wide (twenty-eight by four cubits). They were sewn into two sets of five. Fifty blue loops on the edge of each set were joined with fifty gold clasps, "and the tabernacle shall be one."

The priests in the Holy Place were surrounded by gold walls and a ceiling of color and cherubim, lit by the golden lampstand. It must have looked like a small piece of heaven. That was the point. God was showing Israel a copy of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5). Notice the word one. The many curtains made one dwelling. Paul says believers are "being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). Many members, one house.

**26:7-14** *And you shall make curtains of goats' **hair** for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains you shall make them. The length of the one curtain **shall be** approximately 45 feet (thirty by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for the eleven curtains. And you shall join five of the curtains by themselves and six of the curtains by themselves, and you shall fold double the sixth curtain at the front of the face of the tent. And you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain, the outermost in the set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain of the second set. And you shall make clasps of bronze, fifty, and you shall bring the clasps into the loops, and you shall join the tent, and it shall be one. And the overhang that remains in the curtains of the tent, the half of the curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. And approximately 18 inches (the cubit) on this **side** and approximately 18 inches (the cubit) on that **side**, in what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall be hanging over the sides of the tabernacle on this **side** and on that **side**, to cover it. And you shall make a covering for the tent **of** skins of rams dyed red, and a covering of skins of dolphins from above.*

Over the linen came a tent of goats' hair: eleven curtains, each about forty-five feet long and six feet wide. They were joined into a set of five and a set of six with fifty bronze clasps. They were a little larger than the linen, so they hung down over the back and the sides to cover it. The sixth curtain was folded double at the front.

Over that went "a covering for the tent of skins of rams dyed red, and a covering of skins of dolphins from above." The outer covering was plain and weather-proof. From outside, the tabernacle did not look like much. All the beauty was inside.

Isaiah said of the coming Servant of the LORD that He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him (Isaiah 53:2). Many have seen the tabernacle as a picture of Christ in this way: plain to those outside, but full of glory to those who come in. The rams' skins dyed red remind us of the ram that died in Isaac's place (Genesis 22:13) and of the blood that covers us. These are pictures, not direct New Testament teaching, but they fit what the New Testament says about Christ.

**26:15-25** *And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle **of** acacia wood, standing upright. Approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) **shall be** the length of the board, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and the half of the cubit) the breadth of the one board. Two tenons **shall be** for the one board, fitted each to its fellow; so you shall do for all the boards of the tabernacle. And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the side of the south, southward. And you shall make forty bases of silver under the twenty boards: two bases under the one board for its two tenons, and two bases under the one board for its two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle, for the north side, twenty boards, and their forty bases **of** silver: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board. And for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six boards. And two boards you shall make for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. And they shall be doubled from below, and together they shall be complete at its top to the one ring; so it shall be for both of them; they shall be for the two corners. And there shall be eight boards, and their bases **of** silver, sixteen bases: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board.*

"You shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright." Each board, or frame, was about fifteen feet tall and two feet three inches wide (ten cubits by a cubit and a half). Each had two tenons, pegs at the bottom, that fit into two silver bases.

There were twenty boards on the south side and twenty on the north side, each with two silver bases. The back, to the west, had six boards plus two corner boards, eight in all, with sixteen silver bases. Twenty boards at a cubit and a half each made each side about forty-five feet long. The whole tent was about forty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide and tall.

The silver for these bases came from the atonement money each Israelite paid, half a shekel per person, as 30:11-16 and 38:25-27 explain. So the whole house of God rested on silver that was called "the silver of the atonement" (30:16). God's dwelling stood on the price of redemption. Peter says we were redeemed "not with perishable things, silver or gold," but "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

**26:26-30** *And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle for the rear, westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards* ***shall be*** *passing through from end to end. And the boards you shall overlay* ***with*** *gold, and their rings you shall make* ***of*** *gold, housings for the bars; and you shall overlay the bars* ***with*** *gold. And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown on the mountain.*

"You shall make bars of acacia wood," five for each side and five for the back. "The middle bar in the midst of the boards shall be passing through from end to end." The bars held the boards firmly together. The boards were overlaid with gold, with gold rings to hold the bars, and the bars too were covered with gold.

"You shall raise up the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown on the mountain." For the third time God says, follow the pattern (25:9, 40). God's dwelling had to be built God's way.

The tabernacle was built to be taken down and moved. Every piece could be carried. For almost five hundred years, until Solomon built the temple, God's house was a tent that traveled with His people. God did not stay behind while Israel moved. He went with them. Paul calls our bodies an earthly "tent" (2 Corinthians 5:1). Our lives here are a journey too, and God goes with us.

**26:31-35** *And you shall make a veil* ***of*** *blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he shall make it,* ***with*** *cherubim. And you shall put it on four pillars of acacia overlaid* ***with*** *gold, their hooks* ***of*** *gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall put the veil under the clasps, and you shall bring there, inside the veil, the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall separate for you between the holy place and the holy of holies. And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies. And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand opposite the table on the side of the tabernacle southward; and the table you shall put on the north side.*

"You shall make a veil of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he shall make it, with cherubim." The veil was a thick curtain hung on four gold-covered pillars on silver bases, under the clasps that joined the linen curtains.

Behind the veil was the ark of the testimony. "The veil shall separate for you between the holy place and the holy of holies." The holy of holies, or Most Holy Place, was most likely a perfect cube, about fifteen feet each way. The mercy seat stood there. The Holy Place in front of the veil was twice as long. The table stood on the north side and the lampstand on the south side, facing each other.

The veil had one message: keep out. Only the high priest could go behind it, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, and only with blood (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:7). Hebrews 9:8 says the Holy Spirit was showing by this that "the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest."

Then came the cross. When Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). From top to bottom: God tore it, not man. Hebrews 10:19-20 says we now have "confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." The veil was a picture of Christ's body. When His body was broken for us, the way into God's presence was opened to every believer.

**26:36-37** *And you shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent **of** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and you shall overlay them **with** gold, their hooks **of** gold; and you shall cast for them five bases of bronze.*

"You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer." This was the door into the Holy Place, hung on five gold-covered pillars. Their bases were bronze, not silver. Bronze in the tabernacle was used for the things outside, nearer to the courtyard and the altar.

The tabernacle had only one entrance, on the east side. There was one way in. Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved" (John 10:9), and "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Do you see how the whole tent preaches Christ? One door. Furniture that pictures Him as the bread and the light. A veil that is His flesh, torn for us. A mercy seat where the blood is sprinkled. God did not give Israel these details to bore them. He gave them a picture book of the gospel. Have you come in through the one door?

## Chapter 26 Summary

God told Moses how to make the tabernacle. The inner layer was ten curtains of fine linen in blue, purple and scarlet, woven with cherubim and joined by gold clasps into one dwelling. Over it went eleven curtains of goats' hair joined with bronze clasps, then a covering of rams' skins dyed red, and an outer covering of skins. The frame was made of upright boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold, each fifteen feet tall, standing on two silver bases: twenty on the south, twenty on the north and eight at the back. Gold-covered bars, with a middle bar running end to end, held the boards together, all according to the plan shown on the mountain. A veil of blue, purple and scarlet linen with cherubim hung on four gold-covered pillars and separated the Holy Place from the holy of holies, where the ark and mercy seat stood. The table and lampstand stood in the Holy Place, facing each other. A screen of colored linen on five pillars with bronze bases covered the entrance.

## Chapter 26 Study Questions

1. What was the inner layer of the tabernacle made of, and what was woven into it? (26:1)

2. Why do you think God said "the tabernacle shall be one" after describing the joined curtains? (26:6)

3. What were the four layers of covering, and how did the tabernacle look from the outside? (26:1, 7, 14)

4. What did the boards stand on, and where did that silver come from? (26:19; 30:16)

5. Why was the tabernacle built so that it could be taken down and carried?

6. What did the veil separate, and who could go behind it? (26:33; Hebrews 9:7)

7. What happened to the veil of the temple when Jesus died, and what does Hebrews 10:19-20 say it means?

8. How many entrances did the tabernacle have, and how does that point to Jesus? (26:36; John 10:9)

9. The tabernacle looked plain outside but was glorious inside. How does that challenge the way you judge people, or the way you think about Jesus?

10. The veil is torn. Do you come to God with the confidence Hebrews 10:19 describes, or do you still feel shut out? Why?

# Chapter 27: The Altar and the Courtyard

## Scripture

**27:1-8** And you shall make the altar ***of*** acacia wood, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) ***in*** length and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) ***in*** breadth; the altar shall be square, and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) ***shall be*** its height. And you shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be from it; and you shall overlay it ***with*** bronze. And you shall make its pots to remove its ashes, and its shovels and its bowls and its forks and its fire pans; all its articles you shall make ***of*** bronze. And you shall make for it a grating, a work of network of bronze; and you shall make on the net four rings of bronze on its four ends. And you shall put it under the ledge of the altar from below, and the net shall be to the middle of the altar. And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them ***with*** bronze. And its poles shall be brought into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when carrying it. Hollow, ***of*** planks, you shall make it; just as He showed you on the mountain, so they shall make ***it***.

**27:9-21** And you shall make the courtyard of the tabernacle: for the side of the south, southward, hangings for the courtyard ***of*** twisted fine linen, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit) ***in*** length for the one side; and its pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, ***of*** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver. And so for the side of the north in length, hangings approximately 150 feet (a hundred ***cubits***) ***in*** length; and its pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, ***of*** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver. And the breadth of the courtyard on the side of the west ***shall be*** hangings of approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits); their pillars ten, and their bases ten. And the breadth of the courtyard on the side of the east, eastward, ***shall be*** approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits). And approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits) of hangings ***shall be*** for the ***one*** wing; their pillars three, and their bases three. And for the second wing, approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen ***cubits***) of hangings; their pillars three, and their bases three. And for the gate of the courtyard a screen of approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits), ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer; their pillars four, and their bases four. All the pillars of the courtyard all around ***shall be*** banded ***with*** silver; their hooks ***of*** silver, and their bases ***of*** bronze. The length of the courtyard ***shall be*** approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit), and the breadth approximately 75 feet (fifty by fifty), and the height approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), ***of*** twisted fine linen; and their bases ***of*** bronze. All the articles of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the courtyard, ***shall be of*** bronze. And you, you shall command the sons of Israel, and let them bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which ***is*** over the testimony, Aaron shall arrange it, and his sons, from evening until morning before the LORD; a statute forever throughout their generations from the sons of Israel.

## Chapter 27 Preview

God has described the tent and the holy things inside it. Now He moves outside, to the courtyard where the people would come. The first thing anyone would meet after walking through the gate was the bronze altar, a large square altar of acacia wood covered with bronze, with a horn at each

corner. Here the animal sacrifices were burned. No one could go further into God's presence without passing the altar.

Around the whole tabernacle was a courtyard about 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, closed in by linen curtains hung on pillars with silver hooks and bronze bases. There was one gate, on the east side, with a colorful screen. The chapter ends with a command to bring pure olive oil so that the lamp in the Holy Place would burn continually. The altar points to the cross, where Christ offered Himself once for all (Hebrews 10:10-12).

## Chapter 27 Study

**27:1-2** *And you shall make the altar **of** acacia wood, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **in** length and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **in** breadth; the altar shall be square, and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) **shall be** its height. And you shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be from it; and you shall overlay it **with** bronze.*

"You shall make the altar of acacia wood, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) in length and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) in breadth; the altar shall be square, and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) shall be its height." This was the largest piece of furniture in the tabernacle. It is often called the bronze altar or the altar of burnt offering, to tell it apart from the small gold altar of incense in chapter 30.

"You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be from it." The horns were part of the altar itself, not added on. In Scripture a horn stands for power and strength. Blood from the sin offerings was put on the horns (Leviticus 4:25). Animals for sacrifice could be tied to them (Psalm 118:27). Later, a man in danger might run and take hold of the horns of the altar to ask for mercy (1 Kings 1:50). The altar was a place of death, but also a place of refuge.

"And you shall overlay it with bronze." The altar held a fire that was never to go out (Leviticus 6:13). Bronze could stand the heat. In the tabernacle, gold was used near God's presence and bronze was used out where sin was dealt with.

**27:3-8** *And you shall make its pots to remove its ashes, and its shovels and its bowls and its forks and its fire pans; all its articles you shall make **of** bronze. And you shall make for it a grating, a work of network of bronze; and you shall make on the net four rings of bronze on its four ends. And you shall put it under the ledge of the altar from below, and the net shall be to the middle of the altar. And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them **with** bronze. And its poles shall be brought into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when carrying it. Hollow, **of** planks, you shall make it; just as He showed you on the mountain, so they shall make **it**.*

All the tools were bronze: pots for the ashes, shovels, bowls for catching the blood, forks for handling the meat, and fire pans for carrying coals.

"You shall make for it a grating, a work of network of bronze." The grate sat inside the altar, halfway up, under a ledge. The fire burned on it, and the ashes fell through. Four bronze rings at

the corners held poles of acacia wood covered with bronze, so the altar could be carried like the rest of the furniture.

"Hollow, of planks, you shall make it; just as He showed you on the mountain." The altar was a hollow box. When it was set up, it may have been filled with earth or stones, like the simple altars of 20:24-25. Scripture doesn't say for sure.

Why was this altar the first thing inside the gate? Because no sinner can come near a holy God without a sacrifice for sin. Every animal that died on this altar said the same thing: sin brings death, and God accepts a substitute in the sinner's place. But Hebrews says the blood of bulls and goats could never truly take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Those sacrifices pointed ahead.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Christ "offered Himself unblemished to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Priests stood at the bronze altar day after day, but Christ, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar," meaning the cross. The altar in the courtyard was a shadow. The cross is the reality.

**27:9-15** *And you shall make the courtyard of the tabernacle: for the side of the south, southward, hangings for the courtyard **of** twisted fine linen, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit) **in** length for the one side; and its pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, **of** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver. And so for the side of the north in length, hangings approximately 150 feet (a hundred **cubits**) **in** length; and its pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, **of** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver. And the breadth of the courtyard on the side of the west **shall be** hangings of approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits); their pillars ten, and their bases ten. And the breadth of the courtyard on the side of the east, eastward, **shall be** approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits). And approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits) of hangings **shall be** for the **one** wing; their pillars three, and their bases three. And for the second wing, approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen **cubits**) of hangings; their pillars three, and their bases three.*

"You shall make the courtyard of the tabernacle." The courtyard was an open-air yard around the tent. It was about 150 feet long (a hundred cubits) on the north and south sides, and about 75 feet wide (fifty cubits) on the west and east. That is about half the length of a football field. The walls were hangings of twisted fine linen, held up by pillars set in bronze bases, with silver hooks and bands: twenty pillars on each long side and ten on the west end.

The east side was the front. There, on either side of the gate, were hangings about 22.5 feet long (fifteen cubits), each with three pillars.

The white linen wall was about 7.5 feet high (27:18). From outside, no one could see in. It marked a clear line between the camp and the holy ground of God's dwelling. The linen may picture the righteousness God requires. Revelation 19:8 says the fine linen of the bride of the Lamb is the righteous acts of the saints. God's holiness sets a boundary that sinners cannot cross on their own.

**27:16-19** *And for the gate of the courtyard a screen of approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits),* ***of*** *blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer; their pillars four, and their bases four. All the pillars of the courtyard all around* ***shall be*** *banded* ***with*** *silver; their hooks* ***of*** *silver, and their bases* ***of*** *bronze. The length of the courtyard* ***shall be*** *approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit), and the breadth approximately 75 feet (fifty by fifty), and the height approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits),* ***of*** *twisted fine linen; and their bases* ***of*** *bronze. All the articles of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the courtyard,* ***shall be of*** *bronze.*

"And for the gate of the courtyard a screen of approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits), of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer." The gate was wide, about thirty feet, and it was colorful, made of the same colors as the veil and the entrance screen. It stood out against the white walls. Anyone could see where to go in.

There was only one gate. You could not climb over the wall or come in through the side. Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). The gate was wide, wide enough for anyone who would come. But it was the only way.

Verse 18 sums up the size of the courtyard: about 150 feet by 75 feet, with walls about 7.5 feet high. "All the articles of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the courtyard, shall be of bronze." Even the tent pegs were part of God's house. Nothing in His service is too small to matter. Some of us are curtains, and some of us are tent pegs, but all of us are needed.

Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise." Israel came to the gate with a sacrifice. We come through Christ, with thanks.

**27:20-21** *And you, you shall command the sons of Israel, and let them bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which* ***is*** *over the testimony, Aaron shall arrange it, and his sons, from evening until morning before the LORD; a statute forever throughout their generations from the sons of Israel.*

"You, you shall command the sons of Israel, and let them bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually." Beaten oil was the best kind. Olives were crushed gently in a mortar, not pressed in a large press, giving clear oil that burned bright with little smoke. The people supplied it. The light in God's house depended on the gifts of the whole nation.

"In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is over the testimony, Aaron shall arrange it, and his sons, from evening until morning before the LORD." The tent of meeting is another name for the tabernacle, the place where God would meet with His people. This is the first time Aaron and his sons are named as the ones who would serve in it. Chapters 28 and 29 will describe their clothes and how they were set apart.

"A statute forever throughout their generations." The lamp was never to go out in the night. God's light was always shining in His house. Oil in Scripture is often linked to the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:1-6). Jesus is the light of the world, and Paul tells believers to "be filled with the

Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The light of Christ in us is kept burning by the Spirit, and it is meant to shine through the night.

## Chapter 27 Summary

God told Moses to make a square altar of acacia wood, about seven and a half feet on each side and four and a half feet high, with horns on its four corners, all overlaid with bronze. Its pots, shovels, bowls, forks and fire pans were bronze, and it had a bronze grate in the middle, rings and bronze-covered poles for carrying, and was made hollow of planks, as God showed on the mountain. Around the tabernacle was a courtyard about 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, closed in by walls of fine linen about seven and a half feet high, hung on pillars with bronze bases and silver hooks and bands. On the east side was one gate, about thirty feet wide, with a screen of blue, purple and scarlet embroidered linen. All the tools and pegs of the tabernacle and courtyard were bronze. The people were to bring pure beaten olive oil so that Aaron and his sons could keep the lamp burning before the LORD from evening until morning, as a lasting statute.

## Chapter 27 Study Questions

1. What was the altar made of, and why was it covered with bronze rather than gold? (27:1-2)

2. What were the horns of the altar, and what were they used for? (27:2; Leviticus 4:25; 1 Kings 1:50)

3. Why do you think the altar was the first thing a worshiper met inside the gate?

4. How do Hebrews 10:4 and 10:12 compare the sacrifices on this altar with Christ's sacrifice?

5. How large was the courtyard, and what were its walls made of? (27:9-18)

6. How many gates did the courtyard have, and what does Jesus say in John 10:7?

7. What kind of oil was to be brought for the lamp, and how long was it to burn? (27:20-21)

8. Who were named to care for the lamp, and what is the tent of meeting? (27:21)

9. Have you come to God through the "altar," trusting Christ's sacrifice for your sins? How would you explain that to someone who asked?

10. Even the tent pegs mattered in God's house (27:19). What "small" place of service has God given you, and how can you do it faithfully this week?

# Chapter 28: The Garments of the Priests

## Scripture

**28:1-14** And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, for him to serve as priest to Me: Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron. And you shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. And you, you shall speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled ***with*** a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the garments of Aaron to sanctify him, for him to serve as priest to Me. And these ***are*** the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother and for his sons, for him to serve as priest to Me. And they, they shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the crimson scarlet and the fine linen. And they shall make the ephod ***of*** gold, blue and purple, crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of a designer. It shall have two shoulder pieces joined at its two ends, and it shall be joined. And the band of its ephod which ***is*** on it shall be like its work, from it, ***of*** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. And you shall take two onyx stones, and you shall engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the second stone, according to their generations. ***With*** the work of an engraver in stone, ***like*** the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; surrounded ***with*** filigree settings of gold you shall make them. And you shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial. And you shall make filigree settings of gold, and two chains of pure gold; braided you shall make them, a work of cordage; and you shall put the chains of cordage on the filigree settings.

**28:15-30** And you shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a designer; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; ***of*** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen you shall make it. It shall be square, folded double; approximately 9 inches (a span) its length, and approximately 9 inches (a span) its breadth. And you shall fill in it a setting of stone, four rows of stone: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl ***shall be*** the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; set ***in*** gold they shall be in their settings. And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names, ***like*** the engravings of a signet, each according to his name; they shall be for the twelve tribes. And you shall make on the breastpiece braided chains, a work of cordage, ***of*** pure gold. And you shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and you shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. And you shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. And the two ends of the two cords you shall put on the two filigree settings, and you shall put ***them*** on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of its face. And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its edge which ***is*** toward the side of the ephod inward. And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod from below, from the front of its face, close to its joining, above the band of the ephod. And let them bind the breastpiece by its rings to the

rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, to be on the band of the ephod, and the breastpiece shall not be displaced from on the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. And you shall put into the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over the heart of Aaron when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

**28:31-43** And you shall make the robe of the ephod entirely ***of*** blue. And the opening of its head shall be in its midst; an edge shall be for its opening all around, the work of a weaver; like the opening of a coat of mail it shall be for it; it shall not be torn. And you shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson scarlet, on its hem all around, and bells of gold in their midst all around: a bell of gold and a pomegranate, a bell of gold and a pomegranate, on the hems of the robe all around. And it shall be on Aaron to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, and he shall not die. And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and you shall engrave on it ***like*** the engravings of a signet, 'Holiness to the LORD.' And you shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the turban; at the front of the face of the turban it shall be. And it shall be on the forehead of Aaron, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify, for all the gifts of their holy things; and it shall be on his forehead continually, for acceptance for them before the LORD. And you shall weave the tunic ***of*** fine linen in checkered work, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and a sash you shall make, the work of an embroiderer. And for the sons of Aaron you shall make tunics, and you shall make for them sashes, and headdresses you shall make for them, for glory and for beauty. And you shall clothe Aaron your brother ***with*** them, and his sons with him, and you shall anoint them, and you shall fill their hand, and you shall sanctify them, and they shall serve as priests to Me. And make for them undergarments of linen to cover the flesh of nakedness; from the hips and to the thighs they shall be. And they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they draw near to the altar to minister in the holy place, and they shall not bear iniquity and die; ***it shall be*** a statute forever for him and for his seed after him.

## Chapter 28 Preview

God has described His house. Now He names the men who will serve in it. Aaron, Moses' brother, and his four sons are set apart as priests. A priest is a man who stands between God and the people. He brings the people's gifts and sacrifices to God, and he brings God's blessing and word back to the people. Aaron would be the high priest, the chief priest, the only one allowed to go behind the veil into the holy of holies.

Most of the chapter describes the clothes the high priest would wear: the ephod with two onyx stones on its shoulders, the breastpiece with twelve precious stones, the blue robe with bells and pomegranates on its hem, and a gold plate on his turban engraved "Holiness to the LORD." Every piece had a purpose. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14), the One Aaron pointed to. As we look at Aaron's clothes, we are looking at a picture of what Jesus does for us.

## Chapter 28 Study

**28:1** *And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, for him to serve as priest to Me: Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron.*

"And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, for him to serve as priest to Me." Until now, Moses had led worship and offered sacrifices, and family heads had acted as priests. Now God set apart one family, from the tribe of Levi, to serve Him in the tabernacle.

Aaron did not apply for the job. God chose him. Hebrews 5:4 makes this point: no one takes this honor for himself, "but the one being called by God, just as also Aaron was." Then Hebrews 5:5 says the same of Jesus. Christ "did not glorify Himself to become a high priest," but the Father appointed Him.

Four sons are named: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Sadly, Nadab and Abihu would later die before the LORD for offering "strange fire, which He had not commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1-2). Being chosen for holy work is a great honor, and it is also a serious trust.

**28:2-5** *And you shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. And you, you shall speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled **with** a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the garments of Aaron to sanctify him, for him to serve as priest to Me. And these **are** the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother and for his sons, for him to serve as priest to Me. And they, they shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the crimson scarlet and the fine linen.*

"And you shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." Garments of holiness means holy clothes, set apart for God's service. They were not everyday clothes. They showed that Aaron stood before a holy God, and they gave his office honor in the eyes of the people.

"And you, you shall speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom." The skilled workers who made the clothes were filled by God for the task. Their skill was a gift from Him. We will meet their leader, Bezalel, in chapter 31. God still gives His people gifts to use for His house (1 Peter 4:10).

Verse 4 lists six pieces: "a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a turban, and a sash." The materials were the same as the tabernacle's: gold, blue, purple, crimson scarlet and fine linen (25:4). The high priest was dressed to match God's house. He belonged there.

**28:6-14** *And they shall make the ephod **of** gold, blue and purple, crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of a designer. It shall have two shoulder pieces joined at its two ends, and it shall be joined. And the band of its ephod which **is** on it shall be like its work, from it, **of** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. And you shall take two onyx stones, and you shall engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the second stone, according to their generations. **With** the work of an engraver in stone, **like** the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; surrounded **with** filigree settings of gold you shall make them. And you shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial. And you shall make filigree settings of gold, and two chains of pure gold; braided you shall make them, a work of cordage; and you shall put the chains of cordage on the filigree settings.*

"And they shall make the ephod of gold, blue and purple, crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of a designer." The ephod was an outer garment, something like a vest or apron, with two shoulder pieces and a woven band around the waist. Gold thread was worked into the cloth (39:3), so it would shine.

"And you shall take two onyx stones, and you shall engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the second stone." The stones were set in gold on the shoulders, "stones of memorial for the sons of Israel." The names were in birth order, "according to their generations."

"And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial." Every time Aaron went in to serve, he carried all twelve tribes on his shoulders. The shoulder is the place of strength, where a load is carried. Jesus pictured Himself as the shepherd who finds the lost sheep and "lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:5). Our High Priest carries us before God. We are not left to stand there on our own strength.

Verses 13-14 call for gold settings and two braided chains of pure gold, which will hold the breastpiece to the shoulders.

**28:15-21** *And you shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a designer; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; **of** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen you shall make it. It shall be square, folded double; approximately 9 inches (a span) its length, and approximately 9 inches (a span) its breadth. And you shall fill in it a setting of stone, four rows of stone: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl **shall be** the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; set **in** gold they shall be in their settings. And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names, **like** the engravings of a signet, each according to his name; they shall be for the twelve tribes.*

"And you shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a designer." The breastpiece was a square pouch, "folded double," about nine inches each way, worn on the chest. It was made of the same rich cloth as the ephod.

On its front were set twelve precious stones in four rows of three: ruby, topaz and beryl; turquoise, sapphire and emerald; jacinth, agate and amethyst; chrysolite, onyx and jasper. We are not sure of the exact modern names for some of these stones, and translations differ. What matters is that each was different, and each was precious.

"And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each according to his name." A signet was a seal, cut into stone to press a mark into clay or wax. Each tribe's name was engraved on its own stone. No tribe was lost in the crowd. Each one shone with its own color before God.

John saw the walls of the New Jerusalem built on twelve foundations of precious stones, with the names of the twelve tribes on its gates (Revelation 21:12, 19-20). God's people are His jewels.

**28:22-28** *And you shall make on the breastpiece braided chains, a work of cordage, **of** pure gold. And you shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and you shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. And you shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. And the two ends of the two cords you shall put on the two filigree settings, and you shall put **them** on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of its face. And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its edge which **is** toward the side of the ephod inward. And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod from below, from the front of its face, close to its joining, above the band of the ephod. And let them bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, to be on the band of the ephod, and the breastpiece shall not be displaced from on the ephod.*

These verses describe how the breastpiece was fastened. Gold chains and rings joined its top corners to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. Two more gold rings on its lower corners were tied with "a lace of blue" to rings on the ephod just above the waistband.

Why so much detail on fasteners? Verse 28 gives the reason: "the breastpiece shall not be displaced from on the ephod." The names on the shoulders and the names over the heart were bound together. They could not slip or fall off while Aaron moved about his work. The people he carried before God were held securely in place. Jesus said of His sheep, "no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

**28:29-30** *And Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. And you shall put into the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over the heart of Aaron when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.*

"And Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually." The shoulders speak of strength. The heart speaks of love. Aaron carried the people on both.

What a comfort this is. Our High Priest does not simply know our names. He carries them on His heart. "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). To intercede is to plead for someone. Right now, Jesus is in heaven speaking to the Father on behalf of every believer (Romans 8:34).

"And you shall put into the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim." These words mean lights and perfections. Scripture never describes what they looked like. They were kept in the pouch of the breastpiece and were used to learn God's will in important decisions (Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6). That is why it was called the breastpiece of judgment: through it, Aaron would "bear the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually."

We do not need the Urim and Thummim today. God has spoken fully in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2), and He has given us His written Word and His Spirit to guide us.

**28:31-35** *And you shall make the robe of the ephod entirely **of** blue. And the opening of its head shall be in its midst; an edge shall be for its opening all around, the work of a weaver; like the opening of a coat of mail it shall be for it; it shall not be torn. And you shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson scarlet, on its hem all around, and bells of gold in their midst all around: a bell of gold and a pomegranate, a bell of gold and a pomegranate, on the hems of the robe all around. And it shall be on Aaron to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, and he shall not die.*

"And you shall make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue." The robe was worn under the ephod. It was one piece, with an opening for the head bound with a woven edge "like the opening of a coat of mail," so that "it shall not be torn." Leviticus 21:10 forbids the high priest to tear his garments. At Jesus' trial, the high priest "tore his garments" (Matthew 26:65), and many have seen in this a sign, though he did not know it, that his office was passing away before the true High Priest.

On the hem were pomegranates of colored yarn, with "bells of gold in their midst all around: a bell of gold and a pomegranate, a bell of gold and a pomegranate." The pomegranate is a fruit full of seeds. The bells made a sound as Aaron walked.

"And its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, and he shall not die." The people outside could hear the bells and know their priest was alive and still serving for them. Inside, the sound was a reminder that he was coming before God only as God had told him to. God's presence was not a place to wander into carelessly.

**28:36-38** *And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and you shall engrave on it **like** the engravings of a signet, 'Holiness to the LORD.' And you shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the turban; at the front of the face of the turban it shall be. And it shall be on the forehead of Aaron, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify, for all the gifts of their holy things; and it shall be on his forehead continually, for acceptance for them before the LORD.*

"And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and you shall engrave on it like the engravings of a signet." The words engraved were "Holiness to the LORD." This plate was tied with a blue lace to the front of the turban, right on Aaron's forehead. It is called "the crown of holiness" in 29:6.

"And Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify, for all the gifts of their holy things." Even the people's gifts to God were not perfect. They came from sinful hands and sinful hearts. The high priest, wearing God's holiness on his forehead, carried that guilt so that the gifts would be "for acceptance for them before the LORD."

Here we see why we need a holy High Priest. Our best prayers and our best service are mixed with sin. They are accepted because Christ is holy for us. "For such a high priest was fitting for us: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). Peter says we offer spiritual sacrifices "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

**28:39-41** *And you shall weave the tunic **of** fine linen in checkered work, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and a sash you shall make, the work of an embroiderer. And for the sons of Aaron you shall make tunics, and you shall make for them sashes, and headdresses you shall make for them, for glory and for beauty. And you shall clothe Aaron your brother **with** them, and his sons with him, and you shall anoint them, and you shall fill their hand, and you shall sanctify them, and they shall serve as priests to Me.*

"And you shall weave the tunic of fine linen in checkered work, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and a sash." The tunic was the long linen garment next to the body, under the robe.

Aaron's sons, the ordinary priests, received simpler clothes: tunics, sashes and headdresses, but they too were "for glory and for beauty." Every priest was dressed with honor.

"And you shall anoint them, and you shall fill their hand, and you shall sanctify them." To anoint is to pour oil on someone to set him apart for a task. To fill the hand is the Hebrew way to say ordain, to put a man into his office. To sanctify is to make holy, set apart for God. Chapter 29 will show how this was done.

Isaiah sang that God "has clothed me with garments of salvation; He has covered me with a robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). The priests could not serve until they were clothed by God. Neither can we. Christ is our righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**28:42-43** *And make for them undergarments of linen to cover the flesh of nakedness; from the hips and to the thighs they shall be. And they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they draw near to the altar to minister in the holy place, and they shall not bear iniquity and die;* ***it shall be*** *a statute forever for him and for his seed after him.*

"And make for them undergarments of linen to cover the flesh of nakedness." Pagan worship often included shameful things. God's worship was to be modest and pure. This fits the earlier command not to build altars with steps (20:26).

"And they shall not bear iniquity and die." To come before God carelessly was deadly. This is "a statute forever for him and for his seed after him." Forever here means as long as that priesthood lasted. Hebrews 7 explains that the priesthood of Aaron was a shadow that gave way to a better one. "For the law appoints men as high priests having weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, perfected forever" (Hebrews 7:28).

Aaron and his sons died, and new priests took their place. Jesus, "because He abides forever, holds the priesthood permanently" (Hebrews 7:24). He is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6, 10), the priest-king who blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). Aaron needed holy clothes made for him. Jesus is holiness itself.

## Chapter 28 Summary

God told Moses to bring near Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, to serve Him as priests, and to have skilled workers, filled with wisdom by God, make holy garments for glory and beauty. The high priest wore an ephod of gold, colored yarn and fine linen, with two onyx stones on its shoulders engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. On his chest he wore the breastpiece of judgment, set with twelve precious stones, each engraved with a tribe's name, fastened by gold chains and blue lace so it would not come loose. Inside it were the Urim and Thummim, used to learn God's will. Under the ephod was a blue robe with gold bells and pomegranates on the hem, so the sound would be heard when he went in and out. On his turban was a gold plate engraved "Holiness to the LORD," so he could bear the guilt of the people's holy gifts and make them acceptable. Linen tunics, turbans, sashes, headdresses and undergarments completed the clothing for Aaron and his sons, who were to be anointed, ordained and made holy.

## Chapter 28 Study Questions

1. Who chose Aaron and his sons to be priests, and how does Hebrews 5:4-5 compare Aaron and Christ? (28:1)

2. What were the priests' garments for? (28:2, 40)

3. Whose names did Aaron carry on his shoulders, and where else did he carry them? (28:12, 29)

4. What was the purpose of the Urim and Thummim, and how does God guide His people today? (28:30; Hebrews 1:1-2)

5. Why were the bells on the hem of the robe important? (28:35)

6. What was written on the gold plate, and what did it allow Aaron to do for the people's gifts? (28:36-38)

7. According to Hebrews 7:23-28, how is Jesus a better High Priest than Aaron?

8. Jesus carries your name on His heart and intercedes for you (Hebrews 7:25). How does that change the way you pray?

9. Your best service to God is still mixed with sin. How does knowing that Christ makes it acceptable give you freedom to serve Him?

10. God clothed His priests before they served. What does it mean for you to be clothed in Christ's righteousness?

# Chapter 29: The Consecration of the Priests

## Scripture

**29:1-9** And this ***is*** the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them, to serve as priests to Me: take one young bull, a son of the herd, and two rams without blemish, and bread of unleavened loaves, and cakes of unleavened loaves mixed with oil, and wafers of unleavened loaves smeared with oil; ***of*** fine flour of wheat you shall make them. And you shall put them on one basket, and you shall bring them near in the basket, and the young bull and the two rams. And Aaron and his sons you shall bring near to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. And you shall take the garments, and you shall clothe Aaron ***with*** the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and you shall gird him with the band of the ephod. And you shall put the turban on his head, and you shall put the crown of holiness on the turban. And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall pour ***it*** on his head, and you shall anoint him. And his sons you shall bring near, and you shall clothe them ***with*** tunics, and you shall gird them ***with*** a sash, Aaron and his sons, and you shall bind headdresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs for a statute forever. And you shall fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons.

**29:10-28** And you shall bring near the young bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the young bull. And you shall slaughter the young bull before the LORD, ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And you shall take some of the blood of the young bull, and you shall put ***it*** on the horns of the altar with your finger; and all the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the lobe on the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, and you shall make ***them*** smoke on the altar. And the flesh of the young bull and its hide and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it ***is*** a sin offering. And the one ram you shall take, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and you shall take its blood, and you shall sprinkle ***it*** on the altar all around. And the ram you shall cut into its pieces, and you shall wash its entrails and its legs, and you shall put ***them*** with its pieces and with its head. And you shall make the whole ram smoke on the altar; it ***is*** a burnt offering to the LORD, a soothing aroma; a fire offering to the LORD it ***is***. And you shall take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and you shall take some of its blood, and you shall put ***it*** on the lobe of the ear of Aaron and on the lobe of the ear of his sons, the right ***ear***, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot; and you shall sprinkle the blood on the altar all around. And you shall take some of the blood which ***is*** on the altar, and some of the oil of the anointing, and you shall spatter ***it*** on Aaron and on his garments, and on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he shall be holy, he and his garments, and his sons and the garments of his sons with him. And you shall take from the ram the fat and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat which ***is*** on them, and the right thigh, for it ***is*** a ram of installation; and one round loaf of bread, and one cake of bread ***with*** oil, and one wafer, from the basket of the unleavened loaves which ***is*** before the LORD. And you shall put the whole on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and you shall wave them ***as*** a wave offering before

the LORD. And you shall take them from their hand, and you shall make ***them*** smoke on the altar on the burnt offering, for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it ***is*** a fire offering to the LORD. And you shall take the breast from the ram of installation which ***is*** for Aaron, and you shall wave it ***as*** a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be for you for a portion. And you shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution, which was waved and which was lifted up, from the ram of installation, from that which ***is*** for Aaron and from that which ***is*** for his sons. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons for a due forever from the sons of Israel, for it ***is*** a contribution; and it shall be a contribution from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, their contribution to the LORD.

**29:29-46** And the garments of holiness which ***are*** for Aaron shall be for his sons after him, for anointing in them and for filling their hand in them. Seven days the priest in his place from among his sons shall wear them, who goes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place. And the ram of installation you shall take, and you shall boil its flesh in a holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread which ***is*** in the basket, ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And they shall eat those ***things*** by which atonement was made, to fill their hand, to sanctify them; and a stranger shall not eat ***them***, for they ***are*** holy. And if ***any*** of the flesh of the installation and of the bread is left over until the morning, then you shall burn what is left over with fire; it shall not be eaten, for it ***is*** holy. And you shall do thus to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; seven days you shall fill their hand. And a young bull ***as*** a sin offering you shall offer each day for atonement; and you shall make a sin offering on the altar when you make atonement on it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it. Seven days you shall make atonement on the altar, and you shall sanctify it; and the altar shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches the altar shall be holy. And this ***is*** what you shall offer on the altar: lambs, sons of a year, two each day, continually. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb you shall offer between the two evenings; and approximately 2 quarts (a tenth ***of an ephah***) of fine flour mixed with approximately 1 quart (the fourth of the hin) of beaten oil, and a drink offering of approximately 1 quart (the fourth of the hin) of wine, for the one lamb. And the second lamb you shall offer between the two evenings; like the grain offering of the morning and like its drink offering you shall offer with it, for a soothing aroma, a fire offering to the LORD, a continual burnt offering throughout your generations ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar; and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify to serve as priests to Me. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them. And they shall know that I ***am*** the LORD their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, that I might dwell in their midst; I ***am*** the LORD their God.

## Chapter 29 Preview

Chapter 28 described the priests' clothes. Chapter 29 tells how Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated, which means set apart as holy for God's service. The ceremony would last seven days. They were washed, clothed and anointed with oil. Then three animals were offered: a young bull as a sin offering, one ram as a burnt offering, and a second ram, the ram of installation, whose

blood was put on the priests' right ear, thumb and big toe. Leviticus 8 tells how Moses carried out these commands.

The chapter ends with the daily burnt offering, a lamb every morning and every evening, and with one of the most beautiful promises in Exodus: "I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them" (29:45). All of this pointed ahead. Hebrews tells us that Jesus did not need to offer sacrifices for His own sins, and He did not need to offer them again and again. "This He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27).

## Chapter 29 Study

**29:1-3** *And this **is** the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them, to serve as priests to Me: take one young bull, a son of the herd, and two rams without blemish, and bread of unleavened loaves, and cakes of unleavened loaves mixed with oil, and wafers of unleavened loaves smeared with oil; **of** fine flour of wheat you shall make them. And you shall put them on one basket, and you shall bring them near in the basket, and the young bull and the two rams.*

"And this is the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them, to serve as priests to Me." To sanctify means to make holy or set apart for God. Aaron and his sons were sinners like everyone else. Before they could serve a holy God, something had to be done for them.

Moses was to bring "one young bull, a son of the herd, and two rams without blemish." Without blemish means without defect. God wanted the best, healthy and whole. Every sacrifice without blemish points to Christ. Peter says we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

He was also to bring unleavened bread, cakes mixed with oil and thin wafers spread with oil, all made of fine wheat flour, in one basket. Unleavened means made without yeast. Israel had eaten unleavened bread on the night of the Passover (12:8).

**29:4-7** *And Aaron and his sons you shall bring near to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. And you shall take the garments, and you shall clothe Aaron **with** the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and you shall gird him with the band of the ephod. And you shall put the turban on his head, and you shall put the crown of holiness on the turban. And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall pour **it** on his head, and you shall anoint him.*

"And Aaron and his sons you shall bring near to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water." The first step was washing. No one could serve God unclean. Then Moses was to dress Aaron in each piece of the holy clothing from chapter 28: tunic, robe, ephod, breastpiece and band, the turban, and "the crown of holiness on the turban," the gold plate engraved "Holiness to the LORD."

"And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall pour it on his head, and you shall anoint him." Psalm 133:2 remembers the oil running down Aaron's beard onto his robes. The anointing set him apart, and oil is often a picture of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Notice the order: washed, clothed, anointed. Paul says God saved us "through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The title Messiah, or Christ, means the Anointed One. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Acts 10:38), and through Him every believer is washed, clothed in His righteousness and given the Spirit.

**29:8-9** *And his sons you shall bring near, and you shall clothe them **with** tunics, and you shall gird them **with** a sash, Aaron and his sons, and you shall bind headdresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs for a statute forever. And you shall fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons.*

Aaron's sons were then clothed in their tunics, sashes and headdresses. "And the priesthood shall be theirs for a statute forever." The priesthood would stay in Aaron's family for as long as the Law stood.

"And you shall fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons." As we saw at 28:41, to fill the hand means to ordain, to place a man into office. Later in the chapter Moses puts portions of the sacrifice into their hands (29:24). Their hands were filled with what belonged to God, and from that day their work was His.

**29:10-14** *And you shall bring near the young bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the young bull. And you shall slaughter the young bull before the LORD, **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And you shall take some of the blood of the young bull, and you shall put **it** on the horns of the altar with your finger; and all the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the lobe on the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, and you shall make **them** smoke on the altar. And the flesh of the young bull and its hide and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it **is** a sin offering.*

"And Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the young bull." Laying hands on the animal meant, this one stands in my place. The bull was then killed "before the LORD," and Moses put some of its blood on the four horns of the bronze altar (27:2) with his finger and poured the rest at its base.

The fat and certain inner parts were burned on the altar. The rest of the bull, its flesh, hide and dung, was burned "outside the camp; it is a sin offering." A sin offering was a sacrifice to deal with sin and its guilt, so that the sinner could be cleansed and forgiven.

Before Aaron could pray for anyone else, his own sin had to be dealt with. Hebrews 5:3 says the high priest had to offer for himself as well as for the people. Jesus never needed that, because He had no sin. And Hebrews 13:12 says that Jesus, to sanctify the people through His own blood, "suffered outside the gate," just as the sin offering was burned outside the camp.

**29:15-18** *And the one ram you shall take, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and you shall take its blood, and you shall sprinkle* ***it*** *on the altar all around. And the ram you shall cut into its pieces, and you shall wash its entrails and its legs, and you shall put* ***them*** *with its pieces and with its head. And you shall make the whole ram smoke on the altar; it* ***is*** *a burnt offering to the LORD, a soothing aroma; a fire offering to the LORD it* ***is****.*

Next came the first ram. Again Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. It was killed, its blood was sprinkled on the altar all around, and the whole ram was burned. "It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a soothing aroma."

A burnt offering was a sacrifice burned completely on the altar, nothing held back. It pictured complete surrender to God. The sin offering dealt with sin. The burnt offering said, now I am wholly Yours.

"A soothing aroma" means a pleasing smell to God. God was not hungry for smoke. He was pleased with the heart of faith and surrender behind it. Paul uses the same language for Christ, who "gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance" (Ephesians 5:2). He also calls us to present our bodies "as a living, holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1).

**29:19-21** *And you shall take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and you shall take some of its blood, and you shall put* ***it*** *on the lobe of the ear of Aaron and on the lobe of the ear of his sons, the right* ***ear****, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot; and you shall sprinkle the blood on the altar all around. And you shall take some of the blood which* ***is*** *on the altar, and some of the oil of the anointing, and you shall spatter* ***it*** *on Aaron and on his garments, and on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he shall be holy, he and his garments, and his sons and the garments of his sons with him.*

"And you shall take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram." Moses was to put some of its blood "on the lobe of the ear of Aaron and on the lobe of the ear of his sons, the right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot."

Why these three places? The ear hears God's word. The hand does God's work. The foot walks in God's ways. The whole man was marked by the blood and given to God. The right side was the side of strength and honor.

Then Moses sprinkled blood from the altar, mixed with anointing oil, on Aaron, his sons and all their clothes, "and he shall be holy, he and his garments." Blood and oil together: the blood cleanses, and the oil sets apart. We need both what Christ did for us on the cross and what the Spirit does in us. Should our ears, hands and feet still belong to God today? Every part of a believer's life is bought with His blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

**29:22-28** *And you shall take from the ram the fat and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat which **is** on them, and the right thigh, for it **is** a ram of installation; and one round loaf of bread, and one cake of bread **with** oil, and one wafer, from the basket of the unleavened loaves which **is** before the LORD. And you shall put the whole on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and you shall wave them **as** a wave offering before the LORD. And you shall take them from their hand, and you shall make **them** smoke on the altar on the burnt offering, for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it **is** a fire offering to the LORD. And you shall take the breast from the ram of installation which **is** for Aaron, and you shall wave it **as** a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be for you for a portion. And you shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution, which was waved and which was lifted up, from the ram of installation, from that which **is** for Aaron and from that which **is** for his sons. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons for a due forever from the sons of Israel, for it **is** a contribution; and it shall be a contribution from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, their contribution to the LORD.*

The second ram is called "a ram of installation," the ordination ram. Its fat, certain inner parts and the right thigh, together with one loaf, one oil cake and one wafer from the basket, were placed "on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons." They were waved before the LORD as "a wave offering," lifted and moved before God to show that it all belonged to Him. Then Moses burned it on the altar.

This is the filling of the hand that gives ordination its name. Aaron's hands were filled with God's portion, and he gave it all back to God.

The breast of the ram was waved and given to Moses as his portion, since he was acting as priest for this ceremony. From then on, the breast and the thigh of the people's peace offerings would belong to the priests, "a due forever from the sons of Israel." A peace offering was a sacrifice shared in a meal, with part burned for God and part eaten by the priest and the worshiper, a sign of fellowship with God. The priests had no land of their own. God fed them from the offerings.

**29:29-30** *And the garments of holiness which **are** for Aaron shall be for his sons after him, for anointing in them and for filling their hand in them. Seven days the priest in his place from among his sons shall wear them, who goes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.*

"And the garments of holiness which are for Aaron shall be for his sons after him." When Aaron died, his son would be dressed in the same clothes and anointed in them. Numbers 20:25-28 tells how Aaron's clothes were put on Eleazar on Mount Hor before Aaron died.

The new high priest was to wear them "seven days" when he first went in to serve. The clothes stayed. The men changed. "And they indeed have become many priests because they are prevented by death from continuing" (Hebrews 7:23). Every high priest Israel ever had died. Jesus "abides forever" (Hebrews 7:24). We will never need another.

**29:31-35** *And the ram of installation you shall take, and you shall boil its flesh in a holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread which **is** in the basket, **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And they shall eat those **things** by which atonement was made, to fill their hand, to sanctify them; and a stranger shall not eat **them**, for they **are** holy. And if **any** of the flesh of the installation and of the bread is left over until the morning, then you shall burn what is left over with fire; it shall not be eaten, for it **is** holy. And you shall do thus to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; seven days you shall fill their hand.*

The meat of the ordination ram was boiled "in a holy place," and Aaron and his sons ate it with the bread from the basket at the door of the tent. "And they shall eat those things by which atonement was made." Atonement means covering sin and making peace between God and man. The priests ate the meal that had made them clean.

"A stranger shall not eat them, for they are holy." Here a stranger means anyone outside the priestly family. Anything left over until morning was to be burned. Holy things were not to become common leftovers.

"Seven days you shall fill their hand." The ceremony was repeated each day for a week. Seven is the number of completeness in Scripture. Leviticus 8:33-35 adds that the priests were not to leave the entrance of the tent during those days. Being set apart for God takes time and care.

**29:36-37** *And a young bull **as** a sin offering you shall offer each day for atonement; and you shall make a sin offering on the altar when you make atonement on it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it. Seven days you shall make atonement on the altar, and you shall sanctify it; and the altar shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches the altar shall be holy.*

"And a young bull as a sin offering you shall offer each day for atonement." For seven days, a bull was offered each day, not only for the priests but for the altar itself. "Seven days you shall make atonement on the altar, and you shall sanctify it; and the altar shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches the altar shall be holy."

Why would an altar need atonement? It was made by sinful hands and stood among a sinful people. Hebrews 9:21-23 says the copies of heavenly things had to be cleansed with blood. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

"Whatever touches the altar shall be holy" means that whatever touched it came to belong to God and had to be treated that way. Holiness was not a light thing.

**29:38-42** *And this **is** what you shall offer on the altar: lambs, sons of a year, two each day, continually. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb you shall offer between the two evenings; and approximately 2 quarts (a tenth **of an ephah**) of fine flour mixed with approximately 1 quart (the fourth of the hin) of beaten oil, and a drink offering of approximately 1 quart (the fourth of the hin) of wine, for the one lamb. And the second lamb you shall offer between the two evenings; like the grain offering of the morning and like its drink offering you shall offer with it, for a soothing aroma, a fire offering to the LORD, a continual burnt offering throughout your generations **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.*

"And this is what you shall offer on the altar: lambs, sons of a year, two each day, continually." One lamb was offered in the morning and one "between the two evenings," at twilight. With each came about two quarts of fine flour mixed with oil and a drink offering of about one quart of wine. A drink offering was wine poured out before God.

This was "a continual burnt offering throughout your generations." Every day, morning and evening, a lamb was on the altar. Israel's day began and ended with a sacrifice. This went on for centuries.

And yet it never finished the work. "Every priest indeed stands every day ministering and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:11-12). Jesus was the Lamb the morning and evening lambs pointed to. John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Many have noticed that Jesus died at about the hour of the evening offering (Mark 15:34-37).

**29:43-46** *And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar; and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify to serve as priests to Me. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them. And they shall know that I **am** the LORD their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, that I might dwell in their midst; I **am** the LORD their God.*

"Where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory." All this was not about ceremony for its own sake. It was about meeting God. The blood, the washing and the priests made it possible for a holy God to meet sinners and not consume them.

"And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them." This is the goal of the exodus. God did not only bring Israel out of Egypt. He brought them out "that I might dwell in their midst." Salvation is not only being rescued from something. It is being brought to Someone.

"I am the LORD their God." This promise runs all through the Bible. God says it to Israel in the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33). Paul applies it to believers (2 Corinthians 6:16). And at the very end, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them" (Revelation 21:3). What God began in the desert, He will finish in the new creation.

## Chapter 29 Summary

God told Moses how to consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests. Moses was to bring a young bull, two rams without blemish and a basket of unleavened bread. He was to wash Aaron and his sons at the entrance of the tent, dress Aaron in the high priest's garments, anoint him with oil and dress his sons. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the bull, which was killed as a sin offering, its blood put on the altar and its body burned outside the camp. The first ram was burned whole as a burnt offering. The blood of the second ram, the ram of installation, was put on the right ear, thumb and big toe of each priest, and blood and oil were sprinkled on them and their clothes. Parts of this ram with bread were put in their hands, waved before the LORD and burned, and the breast and thigh became the priests' portion. The priests ate the ram's meat and the bread at the tent, and the ceremony lasted seven days, with a sin offering each day to make atonement for the altar. Then God commanded two lambs to be offered every day, one in the morning and one in the evening, with flour, oil and wine. God promised to meet Israel there, to make the tent holy by His glory, and to dwell among them as their God.

## Chapter 29 Study Questions

1. What three things were done to Aaron before any sacrifice was offered? (29:4-7)

2. What did it mean for the priests to lay their hands on the head of the animals? (29:10, 15, 19)

3. What was the difference between the sin offering and the burnt offering? (29:14, 18)

4. Where was the blood of the second ram placed, and what might each place stand for? (29:20)

5. How long did the consecration last, and why do you think it took so long? (29:35-37)

6. How often were lambs offered on the altar, and what does Hebrews 10:11-12 say about those sacrifices? (29:38-42)

7. What was God's goal in bringing Israel out of Egypt, according to verses 45-46?

8. The whole priest was marked with blood, ear, hand and foot. Which part of your life do you find hardest to give fully to God?

9. Aaron needed a sin offering for himself before he could serve. Why is it good news that Jesus needed none?

10. God brought Israel out of Egypt so that He could live among them. How does knowing that God wants to be with you change the way you see your salvation?

# Chapter 30: The Incense Altar and the Atonement Money

## Scripture

**30:1-10** And you shall make an altar ***for*** the smoking of incense; ***of*** acacia wood you shall make it. Approximately 18 inches (a cubit) ***shall be*** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth; it shall be square; and approximately 3 feet (two cubits) its height; its horns ***shall be*** from it. And you shall overlay it ***with*** pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. And two rings of gold you shall make for it under its molding; on its two sides you shall make ***them***, on its two sides; and they shall be for housings for poles to carry it by them. And you shall make the poles ***of*** acacia wood, and you shall overlay them ***with*** gold. And you shall put it before the veil which ***is*** by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat which ***is*** over the testimony, where I will meet with you there. And Aaron shall make incense of fragrances smoke on it; morning by morning, when he tends the lamps, he shall make it smoke. And when Aaron lifts up the lamps between the two evenings, he shall make it smoke, a continual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer up on it strange incense, or burnt offering, or grain offering; and a drink offering you shall not pour out on it. And Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year; with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year he shall make atonement on it throughout your generations; it ***is*** a holy of holies to the LORD."

**30:11-16** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When you take the sum of the sons of Israel by their enrolled ***men***, then they shall give each man a ransom for his soul to the LORD when enrolling them, and there shall not be a plague among them when enrolling them. This they shall give, everyone who passes over to those enrolled: approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel) by the shekel of the holy place; the shekel ***is*** approximately 2/5 ounce (twenty gerahs); the half of the shekel ***is*** a contribution to the LORD. Everyone who passes over to those enrolled, from a son of twenty years and upward, shall give the contribution of the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel), in giving the contribution of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls. And you shall take the silver of the atonement from the sons of Israel, and you shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting; and it shall be for the sons of Israel for a memorial before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls."

**30:17-38** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And you shall make a laver of bronze and its base ***of*** bronze for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And Aaron and his sons shall wash from it their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting they shall wash ***with*** water, and they shall not die; or when they draw near to the altar to minister, to make a fire offering smoke to the LORD, then they shall wash their hands and their feet, and they shall not die; and it shall be for them a statute forever, for him and for his seed throughout their generations." And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And you, take for yourself the finest spices: flowing myrrh, approximately 12.5 pounds (five hundred ***shekels***); and cinnamon of spice, half of it, approximately 6 pounds (two hundred and fifty ***shekels***); and cane of spice, approximately 6 pounds (two hundred and fifty ***shekels***); and cassia, approximately 12.5 pounds (five hundred ***shekels***) by the shekel of the holy place; and

olive oil, approximately 1 gallon (a hin). And you shall make it an oil of anointing of holiness, a perfume of blending, the work of a perfumer; it shall be an oil of anointing of holiness. And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its articles, and the lampstand and its articles, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its articles, and the laver and its base. And you shall sanctify them, and they shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches them shall be holy. And Aaron and his sons you shall anoint, and you shall sanctify them to serve as priests to Me. And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'This shall be an oil of anointing of holiness to Me throughout your generations. On the flesh of man it shall not be poured, and in its proportions you shall not make ***any*** like it; it ***is*** holy; holy it shall be to you. Whoever mixes ***any*** like it, and whoever puts ***any*** of it on a stranger, shall be cut off from his kinsmen.'" And the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices: stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices, and pure frankincense; part for part it shall be. And you shall make it incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and you shall put some of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you there; it shall be a holy of holies to you. And the incense which you shall make, in its proportions you shall not make ***any*** for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. Whoever makes ***any*** like it, to smell it, shall be cut off from his kinsmen."

## Chapter 30 Preview

God's instructions for the tabernacle are almost complete. This chapter adds the last pieces of furniture and supplies. First is a small gold altar for burning incense, set in the Holy Place right in front of the veil. Next is the atonement money: when Israel's men were counted, each one, rich or poor, was to give the same half shekel of silver as a ransom for his life. Then comes the bronze laver, a large basin where the priests washed their hands and feet before they served.

The chapter ends with two recipes: the holy anointing oil, used to anoint the tabernacle, its furniture and the priests, and the holy incense. Neither was ever to be copied for common use. Each item points us to something Christ does for us. The incense pictures prayer rising to God (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4). The ransom reminds us that we "were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold" (1 Peter 1:18), but with the blood of Christ. The laver pictures the daily cleansing every believer needs.

## Chapter 30 Study

**30:1-5** *And you shall make an altar **for** the smoking of incense; **of** acacia wood you shall make it. Approximately 18 inches (a cubit) **shall be** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth; it shall be square; and approximately 3 feet (two cubits) its height; its horns **shall be** from it. And you shall overlay it **with** pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. And two rings of gold you shall make for it under its molding; on its two sides you shall make **them**, on its two sides; and they shall be for housings for poles to carry it by them. And you shall make the poles **of** acacia wood, and you shall overlay them **with** gold.*

"And you shall make an altar for the smoking of incense; of acacia wood you shall make it." Incense is a mixture of spices that gives off a sweet-smelling smoke when it is burned. This altar was small, about eighteen inches square and three feet high, with horns on its four corners. It was covered with pure gold and had a gold molding, rings and gold-covered poles for carrying, like the ark and the table.

Why is this altar described here and not with the other furniture in chapter 25? Scripture does not tell us. Some think it is because the incense altar belongs with the priests' daily service, which has just been described. Either way, it completes the furniture of the Holy Place: the table on the north, the lampstand on the south, and this altar in the middle, in front of the veil.

**30:6-8** *And you shall put it before the veil which **is** by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat which **is** over the testimony, where I will meet with you there. And Aaron shall make incense of fragrances smoke on it; morning by morning, when he tends the lamps, he shall make it smoke. And when Aaron lifts up the lamps between the two evenings, he shall make it smoke, a continual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.*

"And you shall put it before the veil which is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat which is over the testimony, where I will meet with you there." The incense altar stood as close to the ark as anything could stand outside the holy of holies. Only the veil was between them. Hebrews 9:4 links the golden altar with the holy of holies for this reason.

"And Aaron shall make incense of fragrances smoke on it; morning by morning, when he tends the lamps." Every morning and every evening, as the lamps were trimmed and lit, incense was burned. It was "a continual incense before the LORD throughout your generations."

In Scripture, incense is a picture of prayer. David prayed, "Let my prayer be established as incense before You" (Psalm 141:2). In heaven John saw the elders holding "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8). In Luke 1:9-10, while Zechariah the priest burned incense, the people were praying outside. The smoke rose and filled the Holy Place and drifted through to the holy of holies. Our prayers go up to God's throne because our High Priest brings them there. Do you pray morning and evening, as the incense rose?

**30:9-10** *You shall not offer up on it strange incense, or burnt offering, or grain offering; and a drink offering you shall not pour out on it. And Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year; with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year he shall make atonement on it throughout your generations; it* ***is*** *a holy of holies to the LORD."*

"You shall not offer up on it strange incense, or burnt offering, or grain offering." Strange incense means any incense not made by God's recipe. This altar was only for God's incense. Nadab and Abihu died for offering "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1-2). God decides how He is approached.

"And Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year." On the Day of Atonement, once a year, the high priest put blood from the sin offering on the horns of this altar too (Leviticus 16:18-19). Even the place of prayer needed cleansing. Our prayers are accepted, not because they are pure, but because they come through the blood of Christ. "It is a holy of holies to the LORD."

**30:11-12** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When you take the sum of the sons of Israel by their enrolled* ***men****, then they shall give each man a ransom for his soul to the LORD when enrolling them, and there shall not be a plague among them when enrolling them.*

"When you take the sum of the sons of Israel by their enrolled men, then they shall give each man a ransom for his soul to the LORD." When Israel's men were counted, each one had to pay a ransom. A ransom is a price paid to set someone free or spare his life.

Why would counting be dangerous? Counting the army was a way of claiming strength. It could easily become pride, trusting in numbers instead of in God. The people belonged to God, not to their leaders. The ransom said, my life belongs to the LORD. "And there shall not be a plague among them when enrolling them." Second Samuel 24 tells of a plague that came after David counted the people in pride.

**30:13-16** *This they shall give, everyone who passes over to those enrolled: approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel) by the shekel of the holy place; the shekel* ***is*** *approximately 2/5 ounce (twenty gerahs); the half of the shekel* ***is*** *a contribution to the LORD. Everyone who passes over to those enrolled, from a son of twenty years and upward, shall give the contribution of the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel), in giving the contribution of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls. And you shall take the silver of the atonement from the sons of Israel, and you shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting; and it shall be for the sons of Israel for a memorial before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls."*

"This they shall give, everyone who passes over to those enrolled: approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel) by the shekel of the holy place." A shekel was a weight of silver, not a coin at this time. Every man twenty years old and older gave the same half shekel.

"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." Every soul had the same value before God. The rich man could not buy a better standing, and the poor man was not shut out.

That is the gospel too. "For all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and all are saved the same way, by the same price, the blood of Christ.

"And you shall take the silver of the atonement from the sons of Israel, and you shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting." We will see in 38:25-28 that this silver was used to make the bases on which the boards of the tabernacle stood. The whole house of God rested on the ransom money. In the same way, God's people stand on the price of their redemption. It was "a memorial before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls." By the time of Jesus, this half shekel had become a yearly temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27).

Peter wrote that we "were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold, from your futile conduct handed down from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus came "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

**30:17-21** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And you shall make a laver of bronze and its base **of** bronze for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And Aaron and his sons shall wash from it their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting they shall wash **with** water, and they shall not die; or when they draw near to the altar to minister, to make a fire offering smoke to the LORD, then they shall wash their hands and their feet, and they shall not die; and it shall be for them a statute forever, for him and for his seed throughout their generations."*

"And you shall make a laver of bronze and its base of bronze for washing." A laver is a large basin. It was placed between the tent of meeting and the bronze altar, and filled with water. We are not told its size or shape. Chapter 38 tells us it was made from the bronze mirrors of the women who served at the entrance of the tent (38:8).

"And Aaron and his sons shall wash from it their hands and their feet." They washed every time they went into the tent or came near the altar to serve, "and they shall not die." Their hands did the work. Their feet walked on holy ground. Both had to be clean.

The priests were washed all over once, at their ordination (29:4). After that, they washed their hands and feet each time they served. Jesus taught the same thing when He washed His disciples' feet: "The one who has bathed has no need except to wash the feet, but is wholly clean" (John 13:10). When we trust Christ, we are washed once for all and made clean. But we walk through a dirty world, and we need daily cleansing as we confess our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

**30:22-25** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "And you, take for yourself the finest spices: flowing myrrh, approximately 12.5 pounds (five hundred **shekels**); and cinnamon of spice, half of it, approximately 6 pounds (two hundred and fifty **shekels**); and cane of spice, approximately 6 pounds (two hundred and fifty **shekels**); and cassia, approximately 12.5 pounds (five hundred **shekels**) by the shekel of the holy place; and olive oil, approximately 1 gallon (a hin). And you shall make it an oil of anointing of holiness, a perfume of blending, the work of a perfumer; it shall be an oil of anointing of holiness.*

"And you, take for yourself the finest spices." God gave the recipe for the anointing oil: about twelve and a half pounds of flowing myrrh, about six pounds of sweet cinnamon, about six pounds of fragrant cane, about twelve and a half pounds of cassia, a spice like cinnamon, and about a gallon of olive oil.

"And you shall make it an oil of anointing of holiness, a perfume of blending, the work of a perfumer." A perfumer was a skilled maker of fragrances. The oil would have had a rich, strong smell. Wherever it was used, the smell would remind everyone that this thing or person belonged to God.

**30:26-30** *And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its articles, and the lampstand and its articles, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its articles, and the laver and its base. And you shall sanctify them, and they shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches them shall be holy. And Aaron and his sons you shall anoint, and you shall sanctify them to serve as priests to Me.*

"And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony," and every piece of furniture: the table, the lampstand, the incense altar, the bronze altar and the laver. "And you shall sanctify them, and they shall be a holy of holies; whatever touches them shall be holy."

"And Aaron and his sons you shall anoint, and you shall sanctify them to serve as priests to Me." The same oil was on the house, the furniture and the priests. All of them were set apart for God together.

The word Messiah means the Anointed One, and Christ is the Greek form of the same word. Prophets, priests and kings were anointed in Israel. Jesus is all three. "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). And John tells believers that we have an anointing from the Holy One (1 John 2:20, 27), the Holy Spirit living in us.

**30:31-33** *And to the sons of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'This shall be an oil of anointing of holiness to Me throughout your generations. On the flesh of man it shall not be poured, and in its proportions you shall not make **any** like it; it **is** holy; holy it shall be to you. Whoever mixes **any** like it, and whoever puts **any** of it on a stranger, shall be cut off from his kinsmen.'"*

"This shall be an oil of anointing of holiness to Me throughout your generations." The oil was not to be poured on ordinary people, and no one was to make a copy for his own use. "Whoever mixes any like it, and whoever puts any of it on a stranger, shall be cut off from his kinsmen." To be cut off meant to be removed from God's people, either by death or by being put out of the community.

Why so strict? Because the oil stood for God's own setting apart. To use it for perfume was to treat holy things as common. We can do the same with the things of God: using His name, His Word or His church for our own purposes. God's gifts are for His glory.

**30:34-38** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices: stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices, and pure frankincense; part for part it shall be. And you shall make it incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and you shall put some of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you there; it shall be a holy of holies to you. And the incense which you shall make, in its proportions you shall not make* ***any*** *for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. Whoever makes* ***any*** *like it, to smell it, shall be cut off from his kinsmen."*

"Take for yourself spices: stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices, and pure frankincense; part for part it shall be." Stacte was probably a gum from a tree. Onycha may have come from a shellfish. Galbanum was a strong-smelling resin. Frankincense was a white resin with a sweet smell. They were mixed in equal parts, "salted, pure, holy."

Some was beaten very fine and placed "before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you there." Like the oil, it was not to be made for personal use: "it shall be holy to you for the LORD."

Prayer is not a perfume to make us feel good. It is offered to God, in the way He has given, through the High Priest He has appointed. Revelation 8:3-4 shows an angel at the golden altar before God's throne, offering incense "with the prayers of all the saints." Not one believer's prayer is lost. Each one rises before God.

## Chapter 30 Summary

God told Moses to make an altar of incense of acacia wood covered with gold, with horns, rings and poles, and to place it in front of the veil before the ark. Aaron was to burn incense on it every morning and evening, never strange incense or other offerings, and make atonement on its horns once a year. When the men of Israel were counted, each man twenty years and older was to give half a shekel of silver as a ransom for his life, rich and poor alike, so no plague would come on them, and the silver was to be used for the service of the tent. God told Moses to make a bronze laver and set it between the tent and the altar, where the priests were to wash their hands and feet before they served, so they would not die. He gave the recipe for the holy anointing oil, used to anoint the tent, all its furniture and the priests, and forbade any copy of it for common use. Last, He gave the recipe for the holy incense, also never to be made for personal use.

## Chapter 30 Study Questions

1. Where was the incense altar placed, and how often was incense burned on it? (30:6-8)

2. What does incense picture in Psalm 141:2 and Revelation 5:8?

3. Why did every man pay the same half shekel, whether rich or poor? (30:15)

4. What was the atonement silver used for? (30:16; 38:25-28)

5. When did the priests wash at the laver, and what parts did they wash? (30:19-21)

6. How does John 13:10 help explain the difference between being washed once and washing daily?

7. What was anointed with the holy oil, and why could it not be copied? (30:26-33)

8. Our prayers rise to God like incense. What would it look like for your day to begin and end with prayer?

9. You were bought with the same price as every other believer. How should that shape the way you treat other believers?

10. Is there sin you need to bring to the laver today and confess to God? (1 John 1:9)

# Chapter 31: Bezalel and the Sabbath Sign

## Scripture

**31:1-11** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him ***with*** the Spirit of God, with wisdom and with understanding and with knowledge and with all ***kinds of*** work, to devise designs, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in cutting of stone for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all ***kinds of*** work. And I, look, I have given with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of everyone wise of heart I have put wisdom, and they shall make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that ***is*** on it, and all the articles of the tent, and the table and its articles, and the pure lampstand and all its articles, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its articles, and the laver and its base, and the garments of woven work, and the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to serve as priests, and the oil of the anointing, and the incense of the fragrances for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

**31:12-18** And the LORD said to Moses, saying, "And you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it ***is*** a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I ***am*** the LORD who sanctifies you. And you shall keep the Sabbath, for it ***is*** holiness to you. Those who profane it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of its kinsmen. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day ***is*** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, holiness to the LORD. Whoever does work on the day of the Sabbath shall surely be put to death. And the sons of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations ***as*** an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the sons of Israel it ***is*** a sign forever; for ***in*** six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'" And He gave to Moses, when He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

## Chapter 31 Preview

God has finished giving the plans for the tabernacle. Now He names the men who will build it. Bezalel of the tribe of Judah is filled with the Spirit of God for the work, and Oholiab of the tribe of Dan is given to help him, along with every skilled worker. God gave the plan, and God would give the people to carry it out.

Then God speaks once more about the Sabbath. Even the holy work of building the tabernacle was to stop on the seventh day. The Sabbath was a sign between the LORD and Israel that He was the One who made them holy. At the end of forty days on the mountain, God gives Moses the two tablets of stone, "written by the finger of God" (31:18). Moses is about to go down the mountain. What he finds at the bottom will be the subject of chapter 32.

## Chapter 31 Study

**31:1-5** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him **with** the Spirit of God, with wisdom and with understanding and with knowledge and with all **kinds of** work, to devise designs, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in cutting of stone for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all **kinds of** work.*

"See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah." God chose His builder by name. Hur may be the same Hur who held up Moses' arms in the battle with Amalek (17:12) and who was left with Aaron in charge of the people (24:14).

"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom and with understanding and with knowledge and with all kinds of work." This is the first time in the Bible that someone is said to be filled with the Spirit of God. And it is for craftsmanship: to design and work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut stones for setting and to carve wood.

We sometimes think of spiritual gifts only as preaching or praying. But God's Spirit gave Bezalel skill with his hands. The work of an artist, a builder or a craftsman can be done for God's glory, and done in His power. Paul says, "whatever you do, work from the soul, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23).

**31:6-11** *And I, look, I have given with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of everyone wise of heart I have put wisdom, and they shall make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that **is** on it, and all the articles of the tent, and the table and its articles, and the pure lampstand and all its articles, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its articles, and the laver and its base, and the garments of woven work, and the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to serve as priests, and the oil of the anointing, and the incense of the fragrances for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."*

"And I, look, I have given with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan." Judah was the leading tribe. Dan was one of the smaller tribes, from one of Jacob's sons by a servant (Genesis 30:6). God put them side by side. In God's work, the great and the small serve together.

"And in the heart of everyone wise of heart I have put wisdom, and they shall make all that I have commanded you." God did not give the whole job to two men. Every skilled worker was given wisdom for his part. This is how the body of Christ works too. "But to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Verses 7-11 list everything they would make: the tent, the ark and mercy seat, the table, the lampstand, the incense altar, the bronze altar, the laver, the priests' clothes, the anointing oil and the incense. "According to all that I have commanded you they shall do." God gives the pattern, and He gives the gifts to carry it out. When God calls us to a task, He gives what we need to do it.

**31:12-13** *And the LORD said to Moses, saying, "And you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it **is** a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I **am** the LORD who sanctifies you.*

"Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations." Why did God speak of the Sabbath here, right after the building plans? Because the people would be eager to work on God's house. God was telling them, even this holy work stops on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2-3 repeats the command right before the building begins.

The Sabbath was "a sign." A sign is a mark that shows something. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:11). The rainbow was the sign of His covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:13). The Sabbath was the sign of His covenant with Israel at Sinai.

What did it show? "To know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you." The LORD made Israel holy. They did not make themselves holy by their work. Each week, when they stopped working, they confessed that their standing with God was His gift.

**31:14-15** *And you shall keep the Sabbath, for it **is** holiness to you. Those who profane it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of its kinsmen. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day **is** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, holiness to the LORD. Whoever does work on the day of the Sabbath shall surely be put to death.*

"And you shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holiness to you. Those who profane it shall surely be put to death." To profane is to treat something holy as common. Working on the Sabbath was not a small matter in Israel. It was breaking the sign of the covenant, like a husband throwing away his wedding ring. Numbers 15:32-36 records one case where this penalty was carried out.

This is hard for us to read. We should remember that Israel was a nation under God's direct rule, and the covenant sign was at the heart of its life with Him. The penalty shows how seriously God took His covenant. The New Testament does not give the church the power of the sword over Sabbath keeping. Paul writes, "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink or in respect of a feast or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of the things coming, but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

"Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day is a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, holiness to the LORD." A Sabbath of Sabbath rest means a full and complete rest.

**31:16-17** *And the sons of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations **as** an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the sons of Israel it **is** a sign forever; for **in** six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'"*

"And the sons of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the sons of Israel it is a sign forever." Notice who the sign was given to: the sons of Israel. The Sabbath was the special sign of God's covenant with that nation.

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." God was not tired. To say He was refreshed is a way of speaking about God in human terms. It means He stopped and delighted in what He had made (Genesis 2:2-3).

How does this apply to Christians? As we saw at 20:8-11, believers differ. Some keep Sunday, the Lord's day, as the Christian Sabbath. Some keep the seventh day. Many see the Sabbath fulfilled in the rest we have in Christ, "a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9), while still keeping a regular day for rest and worship. All agree on this much: God made us to need rest, and true rest is found in Him. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

**31:18** *And He gave to Moses, when He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.*

"And He gave to Moses, when He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God." The tablets held the Ten Commandments (34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13). They are called the testimony because they were God's witness to His covenant. The finger of God is a way of saying God Himself wrote them. No man carved these words.

In the New Testament, God promises a different kind of writing. Through Jeremiah He said, "I will put My law in their inward part, and on their heart I will write it" (Jeremiah 31:33). Paul says believers are a letter "inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on fleshy tablets of heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Moses now held in his hands the covenant written by God. He was about to find that, down below, the people had already broken it.

## Chapter 31 Summary

The LORD told Moses that He had called Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, understanding and knowledge for every kind of craft in metal, stone and wood. He gave him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, as his helper, and put wisdom in the hearts of all the skilled workers to make the tent of meeting, the ark and mercy seat, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the laver, the priests' garments, the anointing oil and the incense, all as God had commanded. Then the LORD told Moses that Israel must keep His Sabbaths as a sign between Him and them that He was the LORD who made them holy. Anyone who worked on the Sabbath was to be put to death, for the Sabbath was a sign forever between the LORD and Israel, because He made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh. When He finished speaking, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone written by the finger of God.

## Chapter 31 Study Questions

1. Who did God choose to build the tabernacle, and what did He fill him with? (31:2-3)

2. What kinds of skill did the Spirit of God give Bezalel? (31:4-5)

3. Who was given to help Bezalel, and who else received wisdom for the work? (31:6)

4. Why do you think God spoke about the Sabbath right after the building plans? (31:13; 35:2-3)

5. What was the Sabbath a sign of, and who was it given to? (31:13, 16-17)

6. Who wrote the two tablets of the testimony? (31:18)

7. How does 2 Corinthians 3:3 compare the tablets of stone with the work of the Spirit in believers?

8. God filled Bezalel with His Spirit for skilled work with his hands. What skills has God given you that you could use for Him?

9. The Sabbath reminded Israel that God made them holy, not their own work. Where are you still trying to earn what God gives freely?

10. Jesus offers rest to all who are weary (Matthew 11:28). What would it look like for you to rest in Him this week?

# Chapter 32: The Golden Calf

## Scripture

**32:1-14** And the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, and the people assembled against Aaron, and they said to him, "Arise, make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him." And Aaron said to them, "Tear off the rings of gold which ***are*** on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring ***them*** to me." And all the people tore off from themselves the rings of gold which ***were*** on their ears, and they brought ***them*** to Aaron. And he took ***it*** from their hand, and he fashioned it with the engraving tool, and he made it a calf of cast metal; and they said, "These ***are*** your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." And Aaron saw ***it***, and he built an altar before it; and Aaron called out and said, "A feast to the LORD ***is*** tomorrow." And they rose early on the next day, and they offered up burnt offerings and brought near peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play. And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go, go down, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly. They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a calf of cast metal, and they have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it, and they have said, 'These ***are*** your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and look, it ***is*** a people stiff of neck. And now, leave Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may consume them; and that I may make you into a great nation." And Moses entreated the face of the LORD his God, and he said, "Why, O LORD, does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? Why should Egypt speak, saying, 'For evil He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them off the face of the ground'? Turn from the burning of Your anger, and relent concerning the evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You said to them, 'I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit ***it*** forever.'" And the LORD relented concerning the evil which He had spoken to do to His people.

**32:15-24** And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the testimony ***were*** in his hand, tablets written on their two sides; on this ***side*** and on that ***side*** they ***were*** written. And the tablets, they ***were*** the work of God; and the writing, it ***was*** the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. And Joshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting, and he said to Moses, "***There is*** a sound of battle in the camp." And he said, "There is no sound of the shouting of might, and there is no sound of the shouting of weakness; a sound of singing I am hearing." And it was, as soon as he drew near to the camp, that he saw the calf and dances; and the anger of Moses burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands, and he broke them below the mountain. And he took the calf which they had made, and he burned ***it*** with fire, and he ground ***it*** until it was fine, and he scattered ***it*** on the face of the water, and he made the sons of Israel drink ***it***. And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought on it a great sin?" And Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my lord burn; you know the people, that it ***is set*** on evil. And they said to me, 'Make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who

brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.' And I said to them, 'Who has gold? Tear ***it*** off yourselves.' And they gave ***it*** to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out."

**32:25-35** And Moses saw the people, that it ***was*** running wild, for Aaron had let it run wild, for a derision among those who rise up against them. And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and he said, "Who ***is*** for the LORD? To me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Put each man his sword on his thigh; pass through and return from gate to gate in the camp, and kill each man his brother, and each man his friend, and each man his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and ***there*** fell of the people on that day about three thousand men. And Moses said, "Fill your hand today for the LORD, for each man ***has been*** against his son and against his brother, and to put a blessing on you today." And it was on the next day, and Moses said to the people, "You, you have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." And Moses returned to the LORD, and he said, "Oh, this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold. And now, if You will forgive their sin—and if not, wipe me out, please, from Your book which You have written." And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out from My book. And now go, lead the people to ***the place*** of which I have spoken to you. Look, My angel shall go before you; and in the day of My visiting, I will visit their sin on them." And the LORD struck the people, because they had made the calf which Aaron had made.

## Chapter 32 Preview

While God was giving Moses the plans for His house on the mountain, the people at the bottom were breaking His covenant. Only weeks earlier they had promised, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (24:7). Now, tired of waiting for Moses, they asked Aaron to make them gods. Aaron melted their gold earrings into a calf, built an altar, and called for a feast. The people worshiped the calf and said it was the god that brought them out of Egypt.

God told Moses what was happening and said He would destroy the people and make a nation from Moses instead. Moses pleaded for Israel, and the LORD relented. Then Moses went down, saw the calf and the dancing, and broke the tablets. He destroyed the calf, confronted Aaron, and called those who were on the LORD's side. The Levites came, and judgment fell on about three thousand men. The next day Moses went back up to plead again, even offering to be blotted out of God's book in their place. This chapter shows how quickly the human heart turns to idols, how seriously God takes sin, and how much we need a mediator. It points us to the One who was blotted out in our place.

## Chapter 32 Study

**32:1** *And the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, and the people assembled against Aaron, and they said to him, "Arise, make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him."*

"And the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain." Moses had been gone forty days (24:18). The people did not know when he would return. Waiting is hard, and waiting tests what we really trust.

"Arise, make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him." Notice what they said. Moses brought us up. They had already forgotten that it was the LORD who brought them out (20:2). When their human leader was out of sight, they wanted something they could see.

Is that so different from us? When God seems silent and His answer is slow, we are tempted to make something we can see and control and trust that instead.

**32:2-4** *And Aaron said to them, "Tear off the rings of gold which **are** on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring **them** to me." And all the people tore off from themselves the rings of gold which **were** on their ears, and they brought **them** to Aaron. And he took **it** from their hand, and he fashioned it with the engraving tool, and he made it a calf of cast metal; and they said, "These **are** your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."*

"Tear off the rings of gold which are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." Aaron did not argue. He did not remind them of the commandment they had heard from God's own voice: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image" (20:4). He simply took their gold.

This was the gold the Egyptians had given them when they left (12:35-36), gold that God meant for His tabernacle (25:3). Now it went into an idol. The gifts God gives us can be turned against Him.

"And he made it a calf of cast metal." The calf was probably a young bull. Bulls were worshiped in Egypt and Canaan as symbols of strength and fertility. Then the people said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." Psalm 106:20 says, "And they exchanged their glory for the likeness of an ox that eats plants." Stephen remembered this day in his sermon: "And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol" (Acts 7:41).

**32:5-6** *And Aaron saw **it**, and he built an altar before it; and Aaron called out and said, "A feast to the LORD **is** tomorrow." And they rose early on the next day, and they offered up burnt offerings and brought near peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play.*

"And Aaron saw it, and he built an altar before it." Then he announced, "A feast to the LORD is tomorrow." Aaron called the calf by the LORD's name. He may not have thought he was leaving the LORD at all. He was making an image of the LORD, mixing true worship with pagan ways.

That is still idolatry. The second commandment forbids not only other gods but also making images of the true God (20:4-5).

"And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play." The word play here means wild partying, and the word can include sexual sin. Paul warns the church, "And do not become idolaters, as some of them were" (1 Corinthians 10:7), and then he quotes this very verse. Idolatry and immorality often go together. When we leave God's way of worship, we soon leave His way of living too.

**32:7-8** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go, go down, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly. They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a calf of cast metal, and they have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it, and they have said, 'These **are** your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"*

"Go, go down, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly." Notice God's words: your people. They had said Moses brought them up, and now God speaks the same way, as if He were handing them over to Moses. It is a sharp and painful word.

"They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them." How quickly? Only weeks after hearing God's voice from the mountain. God repeats their own words back: "These are your gods, O Israel." God saw and heard everything. Nothing is hidden from Him.

**32:9-10** *And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and look, it **is** a people stiff of neck. And now, leave Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may consume them; and that I may make you into a great nation."*

"I have seen this people, and look, it is a people stiff of neck." A stiff neck describes an ox that will not bend to the yoke and will not turn when the farmer guides it. It means stubborn. Stephen used the same words of the leaders of his day (Acts 7:51).

"And now, leave Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may consume them; and that I may make you into a great nation." God's anger is not a loss of temper. It is His holy, settled opposition to evil. Israel deserved to be destroyed.

But notice: leave Me alone. In a sense, God was inviting Moses to stand in the way. He told Moses His plan so that Moses would plead. And God offered Moses a great temptation: let them go, and I will start over with you. Moses would be the new Abraham. What would he choose?

**32:11-13** *And Moses entreated the face of the LORD his God, and he said, "Why, O LORD, does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? Why should Egypt speak, saying, 'For evil He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them off the face of the ground'? Turn from the burning of Your anger, and relent concerning the evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You said to them, 'I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit* ***it*** *forever.'"*

"And Moses entreated the face of the LORD his God." To entreat is to plead earnestly. This is intercession, praying on behalf of someone else. Moses gave three reasons.

First, they are Your people. "Why, O LORD, does Your anger burn against Your people, whom You brought out from the land of Egypt?" God had said your people. Moses handed them right back: Your people, whom You brought out.

Second, Your name. "Why should Egypt speak," Moses asked, and say that the LORD brought them out for evil, "to kill them in the mountains"? Moses cared about God's honor among the nations.

Third, Your promise. "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself." God had promised the land to their seed forever (Genesis 15:18; 22:16-17). Moses did not plead Israel's goodness. They had none. He pleaded God's own character and God's own word. That is the way to pray. We come to God on the ground of who He is and what He has promised.

**32:14** *And the LORD relented concerning the evil which He had spoken to do to His people.*

"And the LORD relented concerning the evil which He had spoken to do to His people." Does God change His mind? Scripture says God does not change in His character or His purposes (Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). But it also shows God responding to prayer and to repentance (Jeremiah 18:7-8; Jonah 3:10). Both are true.

God's threat of judgment was real, and Israel deserved it. But God had always planned to show mercy through a mediator. He used Moses' prayer to bring it about. When the Bible says God relented, it speaks in human terms of a real change in how God dealt with the people, not a change in who God is. The evil here means disaster or judgment, not moral evil.

Psalm 106:23 says God would have destroyed them, "had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn back His wrath from destroying." A breach is a hole in a city wall. Moses stood in the gap. Does prayer matter? This verse says yes.

**32:15-16** *And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the testimony **were** in his hand, tablets written on their two sides; on this **side** and on that **side** they **were** written. And the tablets, they **were** the work of God; and the writing, it **was** the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.*

"And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand, tablets written on their two sides." The tablets were written front and back.

"And the tablets, they were the work of God; and the writing, it was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets." Moses stresses this twice. These were not his work. They were the most precious objects on earth, God's own handwriting. That makes what happens next all the more striking.

**32:17-18** *And Joshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting, and he said to Moses, "**There is** a sound of battle in the camp." And he said, "There is no sound of the shouting of might, and there is no sound of the shouting of weakness; a sound of singing I am hearing."*

"And Joshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting." He told Moses, "There is a sound of battle in the camp." Joshua had gone part way up the mountain with Moses (24:13) and had waited there. He was a soldier, and he thought the noise was war.

Moses knew better. "There is no sound of the shouting of might, and there is no sound of the shouting of weakness; a sound of singing I am hearing." It was not the shout of victory or the cry of defeat. It was singing. God had already told him what it meant.

**32:19-20** *And it was, as soon as he drew near to the camp, that he saw the calf and dances; and the anger of Moses burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands, and he broke them below the mountain. And he took the calf which they had made, and he burned **it** with fire, and he ground **it** until it was fine, and he scattered **it** on the face of the water, and he made the sons of Israel drink **it**.*

"And it was, as soon as he drew near to the camp, that he saw the calf and dances; and the anger of Moses burned." Moses had prayed for mercy. Now, seeing the sin with his own eyes, he was angry. His anger was not selfish. It was anger at sin against God.

"And he threw the tablets from his hands, and he broke them below the mountain." The breaking of the tablets was a picture of what Israel had done. They had broken the covenant. Moses broke the tablets in front of them so they could see it.

Then Moses burned the calf, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, "and he made the sons of Israel drink it." Their god was nothing. It could be burned, ground and swallowed. They had to taste the bitterness of their own sin. Deuteronomy 9:21 says the water was the stream that came down from the mountain.

**32:21-24** *And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought on it a great sin?" And Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my lord burn; you know the people, that it* ***is set*** *on evil. And they said to me, 'Make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.' And I said to them, 'Who has gold? Tear* ***it*** *off yourselves.' And they gave* ***it*** *to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out."*

"What did this people do to you, that you have brought on it a great sin?" Moses held Aaron responsible. He was the leader left in charge (24:14).

Aaron's answer is sad and almost foolish. First he blamed the people: "you know the people, that it is set on evil." Then he made it sound like an accident: "And I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out." But verse 4 says he fashioned it with a tool.

How often do we do the same? We blame others, and we describe our sin as though it just happened. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). True repentance does not make excuses. It says, I have sinned (Psalm 51:4). Deuteronomy 9:20 tells us that the LORD was very angry with Aaron, enough to destroy him, and that Moses prayed for Aaron too.

**32:25-26** *And Moses saw the people, that it* ***was*** *running wild, for Aaron had let it run wild, for a derision among those who rise up against them. And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and he said, "Who* ***is*** *for the LORD? To me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him.*

"And Moses saw the people, that it was running wild, for Aaron had let it run wild, for a derision among those who rise up against them." The camp was out of control. A derision is something mocked. Israel's enemies would laugh at a people who had lost all restraint. The rebellion was still going on.

"And Moses stood in the gate of the camp." He cried, "Who is for the LORD? To me!" This was a call to choose. Not everyone in the camp was still rebelling, but each person now had to declare openly whose side he was on.

"And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him." Moses' own tribe came. Long before, Jacob had cursed Levi's anger (Genesis 49:5-7). Here Levi's zeal was turned to the LORD's side.

**32:27-29** *And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Put each man his sword on his thigh; pass through and return from gate to gate in the camp, and kill each man his brother, and each man his friend, and each man his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and* ***there*** *fell of the people on that day about three thousand men. And Moses said, "Fill your hand today for the LORD, for each man* ***has been*** *against his son and against his brother, and to put a blessing on you today."*

"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Put each man his sword on his thigh; pass through and return from gate to gate in the camp, and kill each man his brother, and each man his friend, and each man his neighbor.'" This is one of the hardest passages in Exodus. We should read it soberly.

What do we need to understand? First, Israel was a nation that had just entered a covenant with God, sworn with blood, and the very first command of that covenant had been broken in open rebellion. Under the covenant, idolatry was a crime punishable by death (22:20). Second, the judgment was not on the whole nation. It fell on those who were still running wild in open revolt after Moses' call. Third, it was limited: "about three thousand men" out of a very large people. The rest were spared by Moses' prayer.

"Fill your hand today for the LORD, for each man has been against his son and against his brother." To fill the hand is the same phrase used for ordaining the priests (28:41). The Levites showed that they loved God more than their own families. Later the whole tribe of Levi was set apart to serve at the tabernacle (Numbers 3:5-13), and Moses blessed them for this day (Deuteronomy 33:8-9).

This passage is not a pattern for the church. God's people today do not carry the sword. We fight with God's Word, in prayer and in love (Ephesians 6:12-17). But Jesus' call is just as costly: "The one who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

There is a beautiful contrast in the New Testament. When the law was broken at Sinai, about three thousand people died. When the Spirit came at Pentecost, "about three thousand souls" were added to the church (Acts 2:41). Paul says the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

**32:30-32** *And it was on the next day, and Moses said to the people, "You, you have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." And Moses returned to the LORD, and he said, "Oh, this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold. And now, if You will forgive their sin—and if not, wipe me out, please, from Your book which You have written."*

"You, you have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." Moses did not pretend the sin was small. He called it what it was. But he also went to God for them. Perhaps. He was not sure God would forgive.

"Oh, this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold." Moses confessed the people's sin fully, with no excuses. Then he said, "And now, if You will forgive their sin," and the sentence breaks off. Moses could not finish it. Then: "and if not, wipe me out, please, from Your book which You have written."

God's book is the record of those who belong to Him, the book of life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 20:12, 15). Moses was willing to be cut off from God if that would save his people. Paul said something like it: "For I myself was wishing to be accursed from Christ for the sake of my brothers" (Romans 9:3).

This is one of the greatest prayers in the Bible. But Moses could not do what he offered. He was a sinner too, and he could not pay for anyone else's sin. What Moses offered, Jesus did. He was cut off so that we could be written in. "For He made the One who did not know sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**32:33-35** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out from My book. And now go, lead the people to* ***the place*** *of which I have spoken to you. Look, My angel shall go before you; and in the day of My visiting, I will visit their sin on them." And the LORD struck the people, because they had made the calf which Aaron had made.*

"Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out from My book." God did not accept Moses' offer. Each person is responsible for his own sin (Ezekiel 18:20). Moses could not be the substitute for Israel. Only a sinless One could take that place.

"And now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Look, My angel shall go before you." God did not cancel His promise. Israel would still go to the land. But a warning came with it: "and in the day of My visiting, I will visit their sin on them." To visit sin means to bring judgment for it.

"And the LORD struck the people, because they had made the calf which Aaron had made." Scripture does not tell us what this plague was or how many it touched. Sin forgiven may still have consequences. Notice the last words: the calf "they had made" and "Aaron had made." The people and their leader both bore the blame.

The golden calf never went away completely. Centuries later, King Jeroboam set up two golden calves and said the same words: "Look, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28). The heart that makes idols is still with us. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

## Chapter 32 Summary

When Moses stayed long on the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and asked him to make them gods. Aaron took their gold earrings and made a calf of cast metal, and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel." Aaron built an altar and announced a feast to the LORD, and the people offered sacrifices, ate, drank and rose up to play. The LORD told Moses that the people had corrupted themselves and that He would destroy them and make a great nation of Moses. Moses pleaded with the LORD for His people, for His name before Egypt and for His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and the LORD relented. Moses went down with the two tablets written by God. When he saw the calf and the dancing, he broke the tablets at the foot of the mountain, burned and ground the calf and made the people drink it. Aaron blamed the people and said the calf came out of the fire. Moses called those who were for the LORD, and the Levites came. At his command they went through the camp, and about three thousand men died that day. The next day Moses went back to the LORD, confessed the people's great sin and asked God to forgive them, or else to blot him out of His book. The LORD said He would blot out those who had sinned against Him, sent Moses on to lead the people with His angel going before them, and struck the people because of the calf.

## Chapter 32 Study Questions

1. Why did the people ask Aaron to make gods for them, and who did they say had brought them out of Egypt? (32:1)

2. How did Aaron try to connect the calf with the LORD, and why was it still idolatry? (32:5; 20:4-5)

3. What three reasons did Moses give when he pleaded for the people? (32:11-13)

4. What does Psalm 106:23 say about Moses' prayer?

5. Why did Moses break the tablets, and what did he do with the calf? (32:19-20)

6. How did Aaron explain what he had done, and how does it compare with verse 4? (32:22-24)

7. What did Moses offer God in verse 32, and why could he not be Israel's substitute? (32:32-33)

8. The people turned to an idol while they were waiting on God. What do you tend to trust when God seems slow to answer?

9. Aaron blamed others and made his sin sound like an accident. What excuses do you make for your own sin?

10. Moses was willing to be blotted out for his people, and Jesus was cut off for us. Who is God calling you to pray for the way Moses prayed?

# Chapter 33: The Presence of the LORD

## Scripture

**33:1-11** And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'To your seed I will give it.' And I will send before you an angel, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing ***with*** milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, for you ***are*** a people stiff of neck, lest I consume you on the way." And the people heard this evil word, and they mourned, and they did not put, each man, his ornaments on himself. And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You ***are*** a people stiff of neck; ***if*** I go up in your midst ***for*** one moment, I will consume you. And now, take down your ornaments from yourself, that I may know what I will do to you.'" And the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb ***onward***. And Moses would take the tent and pitch it for himself outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he would call it "Tent of Meeting." And it would be ***that*** everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which ***was*** outside the camp. And it would be, when Moses went out to the tent, ***that*** all the people would rise and stand, each man ***at*** the entrance of his tent, and they would look after Moses until he went into the tent. And it would be, when Moses went into the tent, ***that*** the pillar of the cloud would come down and stand ***at*** the entrance of the tent, and He would speak with Moses. And all the people would see the pillar of the cloud standing ***at*** the entrance of the tent, and all the people would rise and bow down, each man ***at*** the entrance of his tent. And the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp; and his attendant Joshua son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the midst of the tent.

**33:12-23** And Moses said to the LORD, "See, You are saying to me, 'Bring up this people,' and You, You have not let me know whom You will send with me. And You, You have said, 'I know you by name, and also you have found favor in My eyes.' And now, if, please, I have found favor in Your eyes, let me know, please, Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your eyes; and see that this nation ***is*** Your people." And He said, "My presence shall go, and I will give you rest." And he said to Him, "If Your presence is not going, do not bring us up from here. And by what then shall it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? ***Is it*** not in Your going with us, and ***in that*** we shall be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people that ***are*** on the face of the ground?" And the LORD said to Moses, "Also this thing which you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I know you by name." And he said, "Show me, please, Your glory." And He said, "I, I will cause all My goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And He said, "You are not able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." And the LORD said, "Look, ***there is*** a place with Me, and you shall stand on the rock. And it shall be, when My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My palm until I have passed by. And I will remove My palm, and you shall see My back; and My face shall not be seen."

## Chapter 33 Preview

After the golden calf, God tells Israel to go on to the promised land. He will send an angel ahead of them and drive out the nations. But He will not go with them Himself, because they are a stiff-necked people and His holy presence would consume them. The people hear this and mourn. They take off their ornaments as a sign of sorrow.

Moses sets up a tent outside the camp, where the pillar of cloud comes down and the LORD speaks with him "face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (33:11). Then Moses prays one of the boldest prayers in the Bible. He will not go without God's presence. God agrees. Then Moses asks for even more: "Show me, please, Your glory" (33:18). God answers that no one can see His face and live, but He will put Moses in a cleft of the rock, cover him with His hand, and let His goodness pass by. This chapter teaches us that the best gift God gives is not the land, or success, or even safety. It is God Himself.

## Chapter 33 Study

**33:1-3** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'To your seed I will give it.' And I will send before you an angel, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing **with** milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, for you **are** a people stiff of neck, lest I consume you on the way."*

"Go, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." God would keep His promise. Israel would still get the land "flowing with milk and honey," a land rich in pasture and food.

"And I will send before you an angel, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite." God's help would still be there. They would still win their battles.

"For I will not go up in your midst, for you are a people stiff of neck, lest I consume you on the way." Here was the problem. God's holiness and their sin could not live side by side. If He stayed in their midst, His holiness would destroy them. So He offered them the gifts without the Giver. They could have the land, but not God's presence. Would that be enough? It is a question for us too. Would we be content with God's blessings if we did not have God?

**33:4-6** *And the people heard this evil word, and they mourned, and they did not put, each man, his ornaments on himself. And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You **are** a people stiff of neck; **if** I go up in your midst **for** one moment, I will consume you. And now, take down your ornaments from yourself, that I may know what I will do to you.'" And the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb **onward**.*

"And the people heard this evil word, and they mourned." Evil here means bad or grievous. To their credit, the people understood what they were losing. The news that God would not go with them broke their hearts.

"And they did not put, each man, his ornaments on himself." Ornaments were jewelry and fine clothes. Their gold earrings had already gone into the calf (32:2-4). Now they took off their jewelry as a sign of sorrow and humility.

God told them, "take down your ornaments from yourself, that I may know what I will do to you." God was giving them time to show true repentance. "And the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward." Horeb is another name for Sinai. The mourning was not for one day. They did not wear their ornaments again after this.

**33:7-8** *And Moses would take the tent and pitch it for himself outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he would call it "Tent of Meeting." And it would be **that** everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which **was** outside the camp. And it would be, when Moses went out to the tent, **that** all the people would rise and stand, each man **at** the entrance of his tent, and they would look after Moses until he went into the tent.*

"And Moses would take the tent and pitch it for himself outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he would call it Tent of Meeting." This was not the tabernacle, which had not yet been built. It was a simpler tent, possibly Moses' own, used as a place to meet with God until the tabernacle was finished.

It was "outside the camp." The camp had been defiled by the calf, so the meeting place was set apart from it. "And it would be that everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp." Anyone who wanted to seek God could go. Hebrews 13:13 calls believers to go out to Jesus "outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

"All the people would rise and stand, each man at the entrance of his tent, and they would look after Moses until he went into the tent." The people watched their mediator go to meet with God for them.

**33:9-11** *And it would be, when Moses went into the tent,* ***that*** *the pillar of the cloud would come down and stand* ***at*** *the entrance of the tent, and He would speak with Moses. And all the people would see the pillar of the cloud standing* ***at*** *the entrance of the tent, and all the people would rise and bow down, each man* ***at*** *the entrance of his tent. And the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp; and his attendant Joshua son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the midst of the tent.*

"When Moses went into the tent, that the pillar of the cloud would come down and stand at the entrance of the tent, and He would speak with Moses." The same cloud that led them out of Egypt (13:21) now came down to the door of the tent. When the people saw it, they "would rise and bow down, each man at the entrance of his tent." They worshiped from a distance.

"And the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." This is an amazing statement. Face to face means openly and directly, without dreams or visions (Numbers 12:6-8). Moses was the friend of God, like Abraham (Isaiah 41:8).

But wait. Verse 20 says no one can see God's face and live. How can both be true? Face to face here describes the closeness of their talk, not that Moses saw the full glory of God's face. He spoke with God as a friend speaks, freely and personally. Jesus says the same of His disciples: "but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). Through Christ, every believer can speak with God that way.

"And his attendant Joshua son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the midst of the tent." Joshua stayed near the place of God's presence. He was learning to love God's presence before he ever led Israel. Young believers who spend time near God become the leaders of tomorrow.

**33:12-13** *And Moses said to the LORD, "See, You are saying to me, 'Bring up this people,' and You, You have not let me know whom You will send with me. And You, You have said, 'I know you by name, and also you have found favor in My eyes.' And now, if, please, I have found favor in Your eyes, let me know, please, Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your eyes; and see that this nation* ***is*** *Your people."*

"See, You are saying to me, 'Bring up this people,' and You, You have not let me know whom You will send with me." Moses was not satisfied with an angel. He wanted to know who would go with him.

"And You, You have said, 'I know you by name, and also you have found favor in My eyes.'" To find favor means to receive grace, kindness that is not earned. Moses built his prayer on God's own words. You said You know me. You said I have Your favor.

"Let me know, please, Your ways, that I may know You." This is what Moses wanted most. Not just God's help, but to know God Himself. Psalm 103:7 says God "made known His ways to Moses." Paul had the same desire: "to know Him" (Philippians 3:10).

"And see that this nation is Your people." God had called them Moses' people (32:7). Moses again gave them back to God: they are Yours.

**33:14-17** *And He said, "My presence shall go, and I will give you rest." And he said to Him, "If Your presence is not going, do not bring us up from here. And by what then shall it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? **Is it** not in Your going with us, and **in that** we shall be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people that **are** on the face of the ground?" And the LORD said to Moses, "Also this thing which you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I know you by name."*

God answered, "My presence shall go, and I will give you rest." Presence is the Hebrew word for face. God Himself would go. Rest means a place of peace and safety, the settled life in the land.

"If Your presence is not going, do not bring us up from here." Moses would rather stay in the desert with God than go to the promised land without Him. Is that how we feel? Do we want God more than His gifts?

"Is it not in Your going with us, and in that we shall be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people that are on the face of the ground?" What made Israel different from every other nation? Not their strength, their laws or their land. It was God's presence with them. The same is true of the church. What makes us different is not our buildings or our programs. It is God living among us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16).

"Also this thing which you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I know you by name." God granted the request. He would go with them. He did it because of grace, the favor He had shown to their mediator. God accepts us the same way, because of the favor He has toward His Son, our Mediator (Ephesians 1:6).

**33:18-19** *And he said, "Show me, please, Your glory." And He said, "I, I will cause all My goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."*

Moses said, "Show me, please, Your glory." God's glory is the shining display of who He is, His beauty, greatness and holiness. Moses had seen God's power in the plagues and the sea. He had heard God's voice. He had been in the cloud. And he still wanted more of God. That is the mark of someone who knows God. The more we know Him, the more we want to know Him.

"I, I will cause all My goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you." God's answer is beautiful. His glory would be shown as His goodness, and it would come with His name. God's glory is not just bright light. It is His character. Chapter 34 tells what God proclaimed.

"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God's grace is His own free choice. No one can demand it or earn it. Israel had no claim on God after the calf. If God showed them mercy, it would be because He chose to. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:15 to show that salvation depends on God's mercy, not on human will or effort. This is good news. If mercy depended on us, none of us would receive it.

**33:20-23** *And He said, "You are not able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." And the LORD said, "Look,* ***there is*** *a place with Me, and you shall stand on the rock. And it shall be, when My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My palm until I have passed by. And I will remove My palm, and you shall see My back; and My face shall not be seen."*

"You are not able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." No sinful man can look on the full glory of a holy God and survive. It would be like looking straight into the sun, only far more. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God."

"Look, there is a place with Me, and you shall stand on the rock." God made a way. He provided a place, close to Himself, where Moses could stand safely.

"I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My palm until I have passed by." A cleft is a crack or opening in the rock. God hid Moses there and covered him with His hand. God's hand was protecting Moses from God's own glory. "And you shall see My back; and My face shall not be seen." God is spirit (John 4:24) and does not have a body like ours. This is God speaking in human terms. Moses would see a passing glimpse of God's glory, what remained after God had gone by, but not the full sight.

Many hymns and teachers have seen a picture of Christ here, the Rock in whom we hide. Paul says the rock that gave Israel water in the wilderness "was the Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4), and many see this rock on Sinai in the same light, though the New Testament does not say so of it. Hidden in Christ, we are safe in the presence of a holy God. And in Christ we see far more than Moses saw: God has "shone in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Jesus said, "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

## Chapter 33 Summary

The LORD told Moses to lead the people on to the land He had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He would send an angel before them and drive out the nations, but He would not go up in their midst, because they were stiff-necked and He might consume them on the way. The people mourned and took off their ornaments. Moses pitched a tent outside the camp and called it the tent of meeting, and anyone who sought the LORD went out to it. When Moses went in, the pillar of cloud came down at the entrance, the people worshiped at their tent doors, and the LORD spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend, while Joshua stayed at the tent. Moses asked to know God's ways and reminded Him that Israel was His people. The LORD promised that His presence would go with them and give them rest. Moses said that without His presence they should not go, for God's presence was what set them apart. The LORD agreed because Moses had found favor in His sight. Then Moses asked to see God's glory. The LORD said He would make His goodness pass before him and proclaim His name, and that He would be gracious to whom He would be gracious. No one could see His face and live, so He would put Moses in a cleft of the rock, cover him with His hand as He passed by, and let him see His back.

## Chapter 33 Study Questions

1. What did God offer Israel in verses 1-3, and what did He hold back? Why?

2. How did the people respond to this news? (33:4-6)

3. What happened when Moses went into the tent of meeting? (33:9-11)

4. How can Moses speak with God "face to face" (33:11) when no one can see God's face and live (33:20)?

5. Why did Moses refuse to go on without God's presence, and what did he say set Israel apart? (33:15-16)

6. What did God say He would show Moses when Moses asked to see His glory? (33:19)

7. How does Paul use verse 19 in Romans 9:15?

8. Would you be satisfied with God's blessings if you did not have God Himself? Be honest.

9. Moses wanted to know God's ways and know God more. What would help you grow in knowing God this month?

10. Moses was hidden in the rock and covered by God's hand. How does it help you to know that in Christ you are safe in God's presence?

# Chapter 34: The Covenant Renewed

## Scripture

**34:1-9** And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ***ones***, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. And be ready by the morning, and you shall go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and you shall station yourself there for Me on the top of the mountain. And no man shall go up with you, and also let no man be seen on all the mountain; also let the flock and the herd not graze in front of that mountain." And he cut out two tablets of stone like the first ***ones***, and Moses rose early in the morning, and he went up to Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him, and he took in his hand two tablets of stone. And the LORD came down in the cloud, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before his face, and He proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and He will surely not leave ***the guilty*** unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons and on sons of sons, on the third and on the fourth ***generation***." And Moses hurried, and he bowed low toward the earth, and he bowed down. And he said, "If, please, I have found favor in Your eyes, O Lord, let the Lord go, please, in our midst, for it ***is*** a people stiff of neck; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as ***Your*** inheritance."

**34:10-28** And He said, "Look, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do wonders which have not been created in all the earth and among all the nations; and all the people in whose midst you ***are*** shall see the work of the LORD, for it ***is*** awesome, that which I am doing with you. Keep for yourself what I am commanding you today. Look, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land into which you are going, lest it become a snare in your midst. Rather, their altars you shall tear down, and their pillars you shall shatter, and its Asherim you shall cut down. For you shall not bow down to another god; for the LORD, Jealous ***is*** His name, He ***is*** a jealous God; lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land, and they prostitute themselves after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and ***one*** invites you, and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters prostitute themselves after their gods, and they cause your sons to prostitute themselves after their gods. Gods of cast metal you shall not make for yourself. The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, just as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. Everything that opens a womb ***is*** Mine, and all your livestock ***that*** is male, that which opens ***the womb*** of ox and sheep. And that which opens ***the womb*** of a donkey you shall ransom with a sheep; and if you do not ransom ***it***, then you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of your sons you shall ransom. And they shall not appear ***before*** My face empty. Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. And the Festival of Weeks you shall observe for yourself, the firstfruits of the harvest of wheat, and the Festival of the Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD, the God of Israel. For I will

dispossess nations from before you, and I will enlarge your territory; and no man shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the face of the LORD your God three times in the year. You shall not slaughter the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; and the sacrifice of the Festival of the Passover shall not remain overnight until the morning. The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring ***into*** the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother." And the LORD said to Moses, "Write for yourself these words, for according to these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; bread he did not eat, and water he did not drink. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words.

**34:29-35** And it was, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, and the two tablets of the testimony ***were*** in the hand of Moses when he came down from the mountain, and Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of His speaking with him. And Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, and look, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to draw near to him. And Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders in the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. And after that all the sons of Israel drew near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. And Moses finished speaking with them, and he put a veil over his face. And when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would remove the veil until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the sons of Israel what he was commanded. And the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of the face of Moses shone; and Moses would put back the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

## Chapter 34 Preview

The covenant had been broken, and the tablets lay in pieces at the foot of the mountain. Now God tells Moses to cut two new tablets and come up again. Then God keeps the promise He made in chapter 33. He comes down in the cloud, passes by Moses, and proclaims His own name: "The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in steadfast love and faithfulness" (34:6). These two verses, 34:6-7, are God's own description of Himself. The rest of the Old Testament quotes them again and again.

Moses bows and asks God to go with His people and forgive them. God renews the covenant. He repeats key commands: no covenant with the people of the land, no other gods, no cast images, and the Sabbath and the three yearly feasts. Moses stays on the mountain another forty days. When he comes down, his face is shining from being with God, and he puts a veil over it. Paul uses this veil in 2 Corinthians 3 to show how much greater is the glory of the new covenant in Christ.

## Chapter 34 Study

**34:1-4** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the first **ones**, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. And be ready by the morning, and you shall go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and you shall station yourself there for Me on the top of the mountain. And no man shall go up with you, and also let no man be seen on all the mountain; also let the flock and the herd not graze in front of that mountain." And he cut out two tablets of stone like the first **ones**, and Moses rose early in the morning, and he went up to Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him, and he took in his hand two tablets of stone.*

"Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke." The first tablets were made by God (32:16). This time Moses had to cut the stone, but God would still do the writing. The covenant would be the same. God's standard did not change because Israel had failed. But God was willing to give it again. That is grace.

"And be ready by the morning." Moses was to come alone. No one else could be on the mountain, not even animals grazing nearby. God's holiness had not changed either.

"And Moses rose early in the morning, and he went up to Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him." He was past eighty years old, and he went early. He did not drag his feet when God called him to meet with Him.

**34:5** *And the LORD came down in the cloud, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

"And the LORD came down in the cloud, and He stood with him there, and He proclaimed the name of the LORD." God kept His word from 33:19. The LORD Himself spoke His own name. In the Bible, a name is more than a label. It tells who someone is. God was about to tell Moses what He is like.

The name is the LORD, YHWH, the name God gave at the burning bush (3:14-15). It means He is the One who is, the God who always exists and always keeps His covenant. Now He fills in the meaning of that name.

**34:6** *And the LORD passed by before his face, and He proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in steadfast love and faithfulness,*

"And the LORD passed by before his face, and He proclaimed." The first words were "The LORD, the LORD." God said His name twice. It was as if He wanted Moses to hear it clearly and never forget it. And notice when He said it: right after the golden calf, to a people who deserved to be destroyed. What did God want them to know about Himself at that moment?

"A God compassionate." The Hebrew word, rachum, is related to the word for a mother's womb. It is the tender love of a mother for her baby. God's heart goes out to His people in their weakness

and misery. David wrote, "As a father has compassion on his sons, the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:13).

"And gracious." The Hebrew word, channun, means showing favor to someone who does not deserve it. Grace is not a reward. It is a gift. Israel had just worshiped a calf. They deserved nothing, and God was gracious to them.

"Slow to anger." The Hebrew is long of nostrils, a picture of a face that takes a long time to turn red with anger. God does get angry at sin, as chapter 32 shows. But He is not quick-tempered. He waits. He gives time to repent. Peter says the Lord "is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"And great in steadfast love." The Hebrew word, hesed, is one of the richest words in the Old Testament. It means loyal, covenant love, love that keeps its promises and does not let go. It is love that stays even when the other one fails. Psalm 136 repeats it twenty-six times: "For His steadfast love is forever."

"And faithfulness." The Hebrew word, emet, means truth, faithfulness, reliability. God is what He says He is, and He does what He says He will do. You can lean your whole weight on Him.

John may be echoing this verse when he says the Word "dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Moses asked to see God's glory, and God proclaimed that He is great in steadfast love and faithfulness. John says that in Jesus we have seen that glory in a human face. "For the law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

**34:7** *keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and He will surely not leave* ***the guilty*** *unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons and on sons of sons, on the third and on the fourth* ***generation****."*

"Keeping steadfast love for thousands." God's loyal love is not used up. It is kept, stored up, for thousands, which may mean thousands of people or thousands of generations (20:6; Deuteronomy 7:9). Either way, His mercy is far larger than His judgment.

"Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Three words for sin are used. Iniquity is crookedness, the bent of the heart. Transgression is rebellion, crossing the line on purpose. Sin is missing the mark. God forgives every kind. The word for forgive means to lift up and carry away. That is what God did for Israel after the calf, and it is what He does for all who come to Him. Micah asked, "Who is a God like You?" because He pardons iniquity (Micah 7:18).

"And He will surely not leave the guilty unpunished." Here is the other side. God's mercy does not mean He pretends sin does not matter. He is just. He will not call evil good.

How can God forgive sin and also refuse to leave the guilty unpunished? This is the great question of the Old Testament. The answer is the cross. At the cross, God punished sin fully in His Son, and so He can forgive the sinner freely. Paul says God set forth Christ as a propitiation, "for Him to be

righteous and the One justifying the one who is of faith of Jesus" (Romans 3:26). At the cross, both halves of 34:7 meet.

"Visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons and on sons of sons, on the third and on the fourth generation." As we saw at 20:5, this does not mean God punishes innocent children for their fathers' sins (Ezekiel 18:20). It means the effects of sin spread through a family, and children who follow their fathers' sin share their judgment. Notice the difference in numbers: judgment to the third and fourth, love to thousands.

These two verses became Israel's creed. Moses prayed them back to God (Numbers 14:18). David sang them (Psalm 86:15; 103:8). Joel used them to call Israel to repent (Joel 2:13). Jonah complained that he knew God was like this (Jonah 4:2). Nehemiah remembered them (Nehemiah 9:17). When God's people wanted to know who He is, they went back to this mountain.

What is God like? This is what He says about Himself. Not what we fear, not what we imagine, but what He has proclaimed.

**34:8-9** *And Moses hurried, and he bowed low toward the earth, and he bowed down. And he said, "If, please, I have found favor in Your eyes, O Lord, let the Lord go, please, in our midst, for it **is** a people stiff of neck; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as **Your** inheritance."*

"And Moses hurried, and he bowed low toward the earth, and he bowed down." When we truly see who God is, the right response is worship.

"If, please, I have found favor in Your eyes, O Lord, let the Lord go, please, in our midst, for it is a people stiff of neck." Moses' reason is surprising. Earlier God said He would not go with them because they were stiff-necked (33:3). Now Moses says, go with us because we are stiff-necked. We need You most because we are so bad. That is faith that has understood grace.

"And pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance." Notice our. Moses counted himself with the people. He did not stand above them. An inheritance is a treasured possession. Moses asked God to keep Israel as His own.

**34:10-11** *And He said, "Look, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do wonders which have not been created in all the earth and among all the nations; and all the people in whose midst you **are** shall see the work of the LORD, for it **is** awesome, that which I am doing with you. Keep for yourself what I am commanding you today. Look, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

"Look, I am making a covenant." God answered by renewing His covenant. "Before all your people I will do wonders which have not been created in all the earth." The nations would see what God was doing with Israel, "for it is awesome."

"Keep for yourself what I am commanding you today." The renewed covenant came with the same call to obey. God would drive out the six nations of Canaan from before them. The rest of the

chapter repeats some of the key laws from chapters 20 to 23, especially those about worship, which Israel had just broken.

**34:12-16** *Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land into which you are going, lest it become a snare in your midst. Rather, their altars you shall tear down, and their pillars you shall shatter, and its Asherim you shall cut down. For you shall not bow down to another god; for the LORD, Jealous **is** His name, He **is** a jealous God; lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land, and they prostitute themselves after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and **one** invites you, and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters prostitute themselves after their gods, and they cause your sons to prostitute themselves after their gods.*

"Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitant of the land." Israel was not to make treaties with the Canaanites, "lest it become a snare in your midst." A snare is a trap.

"Rather, their altars you shall tear down, and their pillars you shall shatter, and its Asherim you shall cut down." The pillars were stones set up in pagan worship. Asherah was a Canaanite goddess of fertility, and her Asherim were wooden poles or trees set up in her honor. Everything connected with false worship was to be destroyed.

"For you shall not bow down to another god; for the LORD, Jealous is His name, He is a jealous God." God's jealousy is not the petty envy of a selfish person. It is the right jealousy of a husband who will not share his wife with another man. God loves His people too much to share them with idols.

That is why the picture in verses 15-16 is of prostitution. Worshiping other gods was spiritual adultery. Marrying into idol-worshiping families would draw Israel's sons away. This is exactly what happened later with Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-8). The concern was faith, not race: Rahab and Ruth were Canaanite and Moabite women who came to trust the LORD. Paul gives believers the same warning: do not be bound together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14).

**34:17-20** *Gods of cast metal you shall not make for yourself. The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, just as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt. Everything that opens a womb **is** Mine, and all your livestock **that** is male, that which opens **the womb** of ox and sheep. And that which opens **the womb** of a donkey you shall ransom with a sheep; and if you do not ransom **it**, then you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of your sons you shall ransom. And they shall not appear **before** My face empty.*

"Gods of cast metal you shall not make for yourself." After the golden calf, this command needed no explaining. It was the very thing Israel had just done.

"The Festival of Unleavened Bread you shall keep," for seven days in the month of Abib, "for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt." Abib is the spring month later called Nisan. The feast reminded them of the night God brought them out (12:15-20).

"Everything that opens a womb is Mine." The firstborn belonged to God because He spared Israel's firstborn at the Passover (13:2, 11-15). Firstborn animals were given to Him. A donkey, which could not be sacrificed, was to be bought back with a sheep. "Every firstborn of your sons you shall ransom." Children were never sacrificed. They were redeemed, bought back.

"And they shall not appear before My face empty." When they came to worship, they were to bring an offering. We come to God with nothing to pay for our salvation. But we do come with thanks and with gifts out of love.

**34:21-24** *Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. And the Festival of Weeks you shall observe for yourself, the firstfruits of the harvest of wheat, and the Festival of the Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times in the year every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD, the God of Israel. For I will dispossess nations from before you, and I will enlarge your territory; and no man shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the face of the LORD your God three times in the year.*

"Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest." The Sabbath was to be kept even in the busiest seasons of the farm year. Plowing and harvest were the times when it would be most tempting to work through. Rest was a test of trust. Would they believe God could provide in six days?

God named the Festival of Weeks, at the wheat harvest, and the Festival of the Ingathering at the end of the year. The Festival of Weeks was later called Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. With Unleavened Bread, these were the three times in the year when "every male of yours shall appear before the face of the Lord, the LORD, the God of Israel" (23:14-17).

"And no man shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the face of the LORD your God." Leaving the farms empty three times a year was risky. God promised to guard the land while they worshiped. When we put God first, He takes care of what we leave in His hands.

**34:25-26** *You shall not slaughter the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; and the sacrifice of the Festival of the Passover shall not remain overnight until the morning. The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring* ***into*** *the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother."*

"You shall not slaughter the blood of My sacrifice with leaven," and the Passover sacrifice was not to be left until morning (12:10). "The first of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God." The firstfruits were the first and best of the harvest. Giving them first was saying, all of it is God's.

"You shall not boil a young goat in the milk of its mother." This law appears three times (23:19; Deuteronomy 14:21). Scripture does not explain it. Many believe it was a pagan practice to avoid. Others see it as a lesson in respect for life, not using the milk that fed a young animal to cook it. Later Jewish tradition built from it the rule of not eating meat and dairy together.

**34:27-28** *And the LORD said to Moses, "Write for yourself these words, for according to these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; bread he did not eat, and water he did not drink. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words.*

"Write for yourself these words, for according to these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." Moses was to write down these laws. The covenant was now restored.

"And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; bread he did not eat, and water he did not drink." This was the second forty-day stay (24:18; Deuteronomy 9:9, 18). Only God could keep Moses alive that long without food or water. Jesus also fasted "forty days and forty nights" in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2).

"And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words." The ten words are the Ten Commandments. In verse 1, God said He would write on the tablets, and Deuteronomy 10:2-4 confirms that the LORD wrote them. These new tablets were later placed in the ark (Deuteronomy 10:5).

**34:29-30** *And it was, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, and the two tablets of the testimony **were** in the hand of Moses when he came down from the mountain, and Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of His speaking with him. And Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, and look, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to draw near to him.*

"And Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of His speaking with him." Moses had been with God, and some of God's glory stayed on his face. He did not know it. The people close to God are often the last to know it shows.

"And they were afraid to draw near to him." The glory on Moses' face reminded them of the glory on the mountain that had terrified them (20:18-19). Even the reflection of God's holiness made sinners afraid.

Some older Bibles translated the word shone as horns, because the Hebrew word is related to the word for horn, as in rays of light. That is why some old paintings and statues show Moses with horns. The meaning is that his face sent out rays of light.

**34:31-32** *And Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders in the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. And after that all the sons of Israel drew near, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.*

"And Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders in the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke to them." Aaron, who had made the calf, came back to listen. Then all the people came near, "and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai." Moses gave them God's word. That was the whole point of his time on the mountain. Being close to God is never meant to stop with us. It is meant to be passed on.

**34:33-35** *And Moses finished speaking with them, and he put a veil over his face. And when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would remove the veil until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the sons of Israel what he was commanded. And the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of the face of Moses shone; and Moses would put back the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.*

"And Moses finished speaking with them, and he put a veil over his face." A veil is a cloth covering. When Moses went in before the LORD, he took it off. When he came out, he spoke God's word with his face uncovered, and then he put the veil back on until he went in again.

Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 3. The glory on Moses' face "was being brought to nothing" (2 Corinthians 3:7). It faded. Moses covered his face "so that the sons of Israel would not look intently into the end of what was being brought to nothing" (2 Corinthians 3:13). The old covenant came with real glory, but it was a fading glory. The new covenant in Christ has a glory that lasts.

Paul goes on: "But whenever it turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:16). And then he says something wonderful. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Moses alone went in to see God, and only his face shone. In Christ, every believer comes before God with an unveiled face, and the glory does not stay on the skin. It changes us from the inside, more and more, into the image of Jesus.

## Chapter 34 Summary

The LORD told Moses to cut two tablets of stone like the first and come up Mount Sinai alone in the morning, and He would write the same words on them. Moses did so, and the LORD came down in the cloud, passed before him and proclaimed His name: the LORD, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, great in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, yet not leaving the guilty unpunished. Moses bowed and worshiped and asked the Lord to go among His stiff-necked people, pardon their sin and take them as His inheritance. The LORD renewed His covenant and promised wonders. He warned Israel to make no covenant with the people of the land, to tear down their altars, pillars and Asherim, to worship no other god, for His name is Jealous, and to make no cast idols. He repeated the laws of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the firstborn, the Sabbath, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Ingathering, the three yearly appearances before Him, the Passover and the firstfruits. Moses stayed forty days and nights without food or water, and the LORD wrote the ten words on the tablets. When Moses came down, his face shone, and the people were afraid. He called them, gave them the LORD's commands, and then covered his face with a veil, removing it whenever he went in to speak with the LORD.

## Chapter 34 Study Questions

1. What was different about the second set of tablets, and what stayed the same? (34:1)

2. List the things God said about Himself in verses 6-7. Which one means the most to you right now?

3. What does the Hebrew word hesed mean, and how is it different from ordinary love? (34:6)

4. How can God forgive sin and also not leave the guilty unpunished? How does the cross answer this? (34:7; Romans 3:26)

5. Why did Moses ask God to go with Israel because they were stiff-necked? (34:9; 33:3)

6. Why is God called Jealous, and what was Israel to do with the altars and Asherim of Canaan? (34:13-14)

7. Why did Moses' face shine, and what does Paul say the veil meant? (34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

8. Is your picture of God the one He gives in 34:6-7, or something else? Where do you need to let His own words correct you?

9. God asked Israel to rest even in plowing and harvest. What busy season makes it hard for you to trust God with rest?

10. Moses' time with God showed on his face. What would others notice about you if you spent more time with God?

# Chapter 35: Gifts for the Tabernacle

## Scripture

**35:1-19** And Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "These ***are*** the words which the LORD has commanded, to do them. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day there shall be for you holiness, a Sabbath of Sabbath rest to the LORD; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle fire in all your dwellings on the day of the Sabbath." And Moses said to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "This ***is*** the word which the LORD has commanded, saying, 'Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; everyone willing of his heart, let him bring it, the contribution of the LORD: gold and silver and bronze, and blue and purple and crimson scarlet and fine linen and goats' ***hair***, and skins of rams dyed red, and skins of dolphins, and acacia wood, and oil for the light, and spices for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances, and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let everyone wise of heart among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its clasps and its boards, its bars, its pillars and its bases; the ark and its poles, the mercy seat, and the veil of the screen; the table and its poles and all its articles, and the bread of the Presence; and the lampstand for the light and its articles and its lamps, and the oil for the light; and the altar of incense and its poles, and the oil of the anointing and the incense of the fragrances, and the screen of the entrance for the entrance of the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering and the grating of bronze which ***belongs*** to it, its poles and all its articles, the laver and its base; the hangings of the courtyard, its pillars and its bases, and the screen of the gate of the courtyard; the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the courtyard and their cords; the garments of woven work for ministering in the holy place, the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to serve as priests.'"

**35:20-35** And all the congregation of the sons of Israel went out from before Moses. And they came, every man whose heart lifted him up, and everyone whose spirit made him willing; they brought the contribution of the LORD for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the garments of holiness. And they came, the men with the women, everyone willing of heart; they brought nose rings and rings and signet rings and pendants, every article of gold, and every man who waved a wave offering of gold to the LORD. And every man with whom was found blue and purple and crimson scarlet and fine linen and goats' ***hair*** and skins of rams dyed red and skins of dolphins brought ***them***. Everyone who contributed a contribution of silver and bronze brought the contribution of the LORD; and everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service brought ***it***. And every woman wise of heart spun with her hands, and they brought what was spun: the blue and the purple, the crimson scarlet and the fine linen. And all the women whose heart lifted them up in wisdom spun the goats' ***hair***. And the leaders brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece, and the spice and the oil, for light and for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances. Every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work which the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses to do, the sons of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD. And Moses said to the sons of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri,

son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him ***with*** the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge, and with all ***kinds of*** work, and to devise designs, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in cutting of stone for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all ***kinds of*** work of design. And to teach He has put in his heart, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them ***with*** wisdom of heart to do all the work of an engraver and a designer and an embroiderer, in the blue and in the purple, in the crimson scarlet and in the fine linen, and of a weaver, doers of all ***kinds of*** work and devisers of designs.

## Chapter 35 Preview

The covenant has been renewed, and now the work begins. Chapters 35 to 40 tell how Israel built the tabernacle. Much of it repeats chapters 25 to 31, often word for word, but now as things done instead of things commanded. Why repeat it all? Because it shows that Israel did exactly what God said. After the disaster of the golden calf, the people obeyed down to the last detail. I will not explain each item again. I will point back to where each one was explained and draw out what is new.

Moses gathers the people and gives them the Sabbath command first. Then he asks for a freewill offering for the work and calls every skilled person to help. The people respond with open hearts. Men and women bring gold, cloth, skins, wood, stones, spices and oil. Skilled women spin yarn and goats' hair. Then Moses introduces Bezalel and Oholiab, whom God has filled with His Spirit to do and to teach the work.

## Chapter 35 Study

**35:1-3** *And Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "These **are** the words which the LORD has commanded, to do them. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day there shall be for you holiness, a Sabbath of Sabbath rest to the LORD; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle fire in all your dwellings on the day of the Sabbath."*

"These are the words which the LORD has commanded, to do them." The first thing Moses told them, before a single board was cut, was the Sabbath: "Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day there shall be for you holiness, a Sabbath of Sabbath rest to the LORD." This repeats 31:12-17, where God gave the Sabbath as the sign of His covenant with Israel, and where we looked at the penalty and the differing views among Christians today.

One new detail is added: "You shall not kindle fire in all your dwellings on the day of the Sabbath." Even the work of the craftsmen, with their fires for melting metal, had to stop. The holiest building project in the world did not override God's day of rest. God's work is to be done God's way. Busy service is never a substitute for obedience.

**35:4-9** *And Moses said to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "This **is** the word which the LORD has commanded, saying, 'Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; everyone willing of his heart, let him bring it, the contribution of the LORD: gold and silver and bronze, and blue and purple and crimson scarlet and fine linen and goats' **hair**, and skins of rams dyed red, and skins of dolphins, and acacia wood, and oil for the light, and spices for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances, and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.*

"Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; everyone willing of his heart, let him bring it." This is the same list God gave in 25:1-7: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and crimson yarn; fine linen and goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red and dolphin skins; acacia wood; oil for the lamp; spices for the anointing oil and incense; and onyx and other stones for the ephod and breastpiece.

Notice "everyone willing of his heart." Only weeks earlier the people had given their gold eagerly for an idol (32:3). Now they were asked to give their gold for God's house. The same hands could serve an idol or the living God. The question was where their hearts were. Jesus said, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

**35:10-19** *And let everyone wise of heart among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its clasps and its boards, its bars, its pillars and its bases; the ark and its poles, the mercy seat, and the veil of the screen; the table and its poles and all its articles, and the bread of the Presence; and the lampstand for the light and its articles and its lamps, and the oil for the light; and the altar of incense and its poles, and the oil of the anointing and the incense of the fragrances, and the screen of the entrance for the entrance of the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering and the grating of bronze which **belongs** to it, its poles and all its articles, the laver and its base; the hangings of the courtyard, its pillars and its bases, and the screen of the gate of the courtyard; the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the courtyard and their cords; the garments of woven work for ministering in the holy place, the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to serve as priests.'"*

"And let everyone wise of heart among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded." Moses then listed everything that was to be made. It is a summary of chapters 25 to 31: the tabernacle with its curtains, boards, bars and bases (26); the ark, mercy seat and veil (25:10-22; 26:31-35); the table and bread of the Presence (25:23-30); the lampstand and oil (25:31-40; 27:20-21); the incense altar, anointing oil and incense (30:1-10, 22-38); the screen of the entrance (26:36-37); the bronze altar and the laver (27:1-8; 30:17-21); the courtyard hangings and gate (27:9-19); and the priests' garments (28).

God needed two things from His people for His house: their gifts and their skills. Some would give materials. Others would give their work. Many would give both. The church is built the same way. Each believer has something to give, and each has a part to play (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

**35:20-29** *And all the congregation of the sons of Israel went out from before Moses. And they came, every man whose heart lifted him up, and everyone whose spirit made him willing; they brought the contribution of the LORD for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the garments of holiness. And they came, the men with the women, everyone willing of heart; they brought nose rings and rings and signet rings and pendants, every article of gold, and every man who waved a wave offering of gold to the LORD. And every man with whom was found blue and purple and crimson scarlet and fine linen and goats'* ***hair*** *and skins of rams dyed red and skins of dolphins brought* ***them****. Everyone who contributed a contribution of silver and bronze brought the contribution of the LORD; and everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service brought* ***it****. And every woman wise of heart spun with her hands, and they brought what was spun: the blue and the purple, the crimson scarlet and the fine linen. And all the women whose heart lifted them up in wisdom spun the goats'* ***hair****. And the leaders brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece, and the spice and the oil, for light and for the oil of the anointing and for the incense of the fragrances. Every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work which the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses to do, the sons of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD.*

"And they came, every man whose heart lifted him up, and everyone whose spirit made him willing." No one was forced. They went home, thought it over, and came back with their gifts. The phrase is repeated again and again in these verses: willing, willing of heart, whose heart lifted them up. God loves willing hearts.

"And they came, the men with the women." Both brought jewelry: nose rings, earrings, signet rings and pendants, "every article of gold." Others brought colored yarn, linen, goats' hair and skins. Some brought silver, bronze and acacia wood.

"And every woman wise of heart spun with her hands." Women with skill spun the blue, purple and crimson yarn and the fine linen. Others "whose heart lifted them up in wisdom spun the goats' hair." Spinning goats' hair was hard and humble work, but it became the tent that covered God's dwelling (26:7). The work of women's hands was part of God's house, and Moses wrote it down so we would know.

"And the leaders brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting," the precious stones for the ephod and breastpiece, along with spices and oil. The leaders gave the costliest gifts. Leaders should lead in giving.

"The sons of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD." A freewill offering is a gift given freely, beyond what is required. The whole nation, men and women, rich and poor, leaders and people, gave together. Paul wrote, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

**35:30-35** *And Moses said to the sons of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him **with** the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge, and with all **kinds of** work, and to devise designs, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in cutting of stone for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all **kinds of** work of design. And to teach He has put in his heart, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them **with** wisdom of heart to do all the work of an engraver and a designer and an embroiderer, in the blue and in the purple, in the crimson scarlet and in the fine linen, and of a weaver, doers of all **kinds of** work and devisers of designs.*

"See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah." Moses now told the people what God had told him in 31:1-11. Bezalel was filled "with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge, and with all kinds of work."

One new thing is said here: "And to teach He has put in his heart, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan." God gave these men not only skill but the ability to teach it to others. The work was too big for two men. They trained the rest. A gift that is passed on multiplies. Paul told Timothy to entrust what he had learned to faithful men "who will be sufficient to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

"He has filled them with wisdom of heart to do all the work of an engraver and a designer and an embroiderer," and of a weaver. Engraving stone, designing patterns, embroidering cloth, weaving: all of it was a gift of God for His house. God cares about beauty and skill. He made both.

## Chapter 35 Summary

Moses gathered all Israel and gave them the LORD's command to work six days and keep the seventh as a holy Sabbath of rest, with no fire kindled in their homes. Then he asked everyone with a willing heart to bring a contribution to the LORD of gold, silver, bronze, colored yarn, fine linen, goats' hair, skins, acacia wood, oil, spices and precious stones, and he called every skilled person to come and make all that the LORD had commanded: the tabernacle and its parts, the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the laver, the courtyard and the priests' garments. The people went out and came back with willing hearts, men and women, bringing jewelry of gold and every kind of material. Skilled women spun yarn, linen and goats' hair, and the leaders brought the precious stones, spices and oil. All Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD. Moses told them that the LORD had called Bezalel of Judah and filled him with His Spirit for every kind of craft, and had given him and Oholiab of Dan the ability to teach others.

## Chapter 35 Study Questions

1. What command did Moses give before any work on the tabernacle began, and what new detail was added? (35:2-3)

2. Where had Israel given their gold just weeks before, and what did they give it for now? (32:3; 35:22)

3. What kind of hearts did the givers have, according to verses 21-22 and 29?

4. What did the skilled women do, and why does it matter that Moses recorded it? (35:25-26)

5. What did the leaders bring? (35:27-28)

6. What new gift does verse 34 say God gave Bezalel and Oholiab?

7. How does 2 Timothy 2:2 show the same pattern of passing skills and truth on to others?

8. Israel gave to an idol and then to God with the same gold. What does your giving show about where your heart is?

9. What skill or gift do you have that could serve God's people, even if it seems as humble as spinning goats' hair?

10. Is there someone you could teach or train in something God has taught you?

# Chapter 36: Building the Tabernacle

## Scripture

**36:1-19** And Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding to know ***how*** to do all the work of the service of the holy place, shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded." And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart lifted him up, to draw near to the work to do it. And they took from before Moses all the contribution which the sons of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the holy place, to do it. And they, they still brought to him a freewill offering morning by morning. And all the wise ***men*** who were doing all the work of the holy place came, each man from his work which they were doing, and they said to Moses, saying, "The people are bringing much, more than enough for the service for the work which the LORD has commanded to do." And Moses commanded, and they caused a proclamation to pass through the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make work anymore for the contribution of the holy place." And the people were restrained from bringing. And the work was sufficient for them for all the work, to do it, and ***there was*** more than enough. And everyone wise of heart among those doing the work made the tabernacle ***with*** ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; ***with*** cherubim, the work of a designer, he made them. The length of the one curtain ***was*** approximately 42 feet (twenty-eight by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for all the curtains. And he joined five of the curtains one to another, and five curtains he joined one to another. And he made loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain, at the end in the coupling; so he did on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second coupling. Fifty loops he made on the one curtain, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain which ***was*** in the second coupling, the loops being opposite one to another. And he made fifty clasps of gold, and he joined the curtains one to another with the clasps; and the tabernacle was one. And he made curtains of goats' ***hair*** for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains he made them. The length of the one curtain ***was*** approximately 45 feet (thirty by the cubit), and approximately 6 feet (four cubits) the breadth of the one curtain; one measure for the eleven curtains. And he joined five of the curtains by themselves and six of the curtains by themselves. And he made fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain of the second set. And he made fifty clasps of bronze to join the tent together, to be one. And he made a covering for the tent ***of*** skins of rams dyed red, and a covering of skins of dolphins from above.

**36:20-38** And he made the boards for the tabernacle ***of*** acacia wood, standing upright. Approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) ***was*** the length of the board, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and the half of the cubit) the breadth of the one board. Two tenons ***were*** for the one board, fitted one to another; so he did for all the boards of the tabernacle. And he made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the side of the south, southward. And forty bases of silver he made under the twenty boards: two bases under the one board for its two tenons, and two bases under the one board for its two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle, for the north side, he made twenty boards, and their forty bases ***of*** silver: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board. And for the rear of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. And two

boards he made for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. And they were doubled from below, and together they were complete to its top, to the one ring; so he did for both of them, for the two corners. And there were eight boards, and their bases ***of*** silver, sixteen bases, two bases, two bases under the one board. And he made bars of acacia wood, five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the rear, westward. And he made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from end to end. And the boards he overlaid ***with*** gold, and their rings he made ***of*** gold, housings for the bars; and he overlaid the bars ***with*** gold. And he made the veil ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he made it, ***with*** cherubim. And he made for it four pillars of acacia, and he overlaid them ***with*** gold, their hooks ***of*** gold; and he cast for them four bases of silver. And he made a screen for the entrance of the tent ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer, and its five pillars and their hooks; and he overlaid their tops and their bands ***with*** gold; and their five bases ***were of*** bronze.

## Chapter 36 Preview

The work begins. Bezalel, Oholiab and the skilled workers receive the offerings and start building. The people keep bringing gifts every morning until the workers come to Moses and say there is more than enough. Moses has to tell the people to stop giving. Few building funds have ever had that problem.

Then the builders make the tabernacle itself, exactly as God described it in chapter 26: the inner linen curtains with cherubim, the goats' hair curtains, the coverings of skins, the gold-covered boards on silver bases, the bars, the veil and the screen for the entrance. I will group these verses and point back to chapter 26, where each part was explained.

## Chapter 36 Study

**36:1-7** *And Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding to know* ***how*** *to do all the work of the service of the holy place, shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded." And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart lifted him up, to draw near to the work to do it. And they took from before Moses all the contribution which the sons of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the holy place, to do it. And they, they still brought to him a freewill offering morning by morning. And all the wise* ***men*** *who were doing all the work of the holy place came, each man from his work which they were doing, and they said to Moses, saying, "The people are bringing much, more than enough for the service for the work which the LORD has commanded to do." And Moses commanded, and they caused a proclamation to pass through the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make work anymore for the contribution of the holy place." And the people were restrained from bringing. And the work was sufficient for them for all the work, to do it, and* ***there was*** *more than enough.*

"And Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding to know how to do all the work of the service of the holy place, shall do according

to all that the LORD has commanded." This verse ends Moses' words from chapter 35. The skill came from the LORD, and the pattern came from the LORD. The workers' part was to do it.

"And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every man wise of heart, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart lifted him up, to draw near to the work to do it." Two things marked these workers. God had given them skill, and their hearts moved them to use it. Skill without a willing heart is not enough. A willing heart without skill can learn.

"And they, they still brought to him a freewill offering morning by morning." The giving did not stop. Every morning, more gifts came.

"The people are bringing much, more than enough for the service for the work which the LORD has commanded to do." The workers were honest. They did not keep collecting for themselves. They went to Moses. "And Moses commanded, and they caused a proclamation to pass through the camp." The message was, "Let neither man nor woman make work anymore for the contribution of the holy place." And so "the people were restrained from bringing."

What a picture of a people moved by grace. A few chapters earlier, these same people had been under God's judgment. Now, forgiven and restored, they gave more than was needed. Forgiven people are generous people. Is there a part of your life where God's forgiveness has not yet turned into gladness and giving?

**36:8-19** *And everyone wise of heart among those doing the work made the tabernacle **with** ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; **with** cherubim, the work of a designer, he made them. The length of the one curtain **was** approximately 42 feet (twenty-eight by the cubit), and the breadth of the one curtain approximately 6 feet (four by the cubit); one measure for all the curtains. And he joined five of the curtains one to another, and five curtains he joined one to another. And he made loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain, at the end in the coupling; so he did on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second coupling. Fifty loops he made on the one curtain, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain which **was** in the second coupling, the loops being opposite one to another. And he made fifty clasps of gold, and he joined the curtains one to another with the clasps; and the tabernacle was one. And he made curtains of goats' **hair** for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains he made them. The length of the one curtain **was** approximately 45 feet (thirty by the cubit), and approximately 6 feet (four cubits) the breadth of the one curtain; one measure for the eleven curtains. And he joined five of the curtains by themselves and six of the curtains by themselves. And he made fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain of the second set. And he made fifty clasps of bronze to join the tent together, to be one. And he made a covering for the tent **of** skins of rams dyed red, and a covering of skins of dolphins from above.*

"And everyone wise of heart among those doing the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains of twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet; with cherubim, the work of a designer, he made them." These verses match 26:1-14 almost word for word. There we saw the four layers of the tabernacle's covering.

The first layer was ten linen curtains woven with cherubim, each about forty-two feet long and six feet wide, joined into two sets of five by loops of blue and fifty gold clasps, "and the tabernacle was one." The second layer was eleven curtains of goats' hair, a little longer, joined with fifty bronze clasps. Over these went a covering of rams' skins dyed red, and on top a covering of dolphin skins.

In chapter 26 God said, "you shall make." Here Moses says, "he made." The only difference is that the command has become a deed. The tabernacle is no longer a plan on a mountain. It is a real tent in the camp. Faith hears God's word, and obedience does it. James wrote, "But be doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

**36:20-34** *And he made the boards for the tabernacle **of** acacia wood, standing upright. Approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) **was** the length of the board, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and the half of the cubit) the breadth of the one board. Two tenons **were** for the one board, fitted one to another; so he did for all the boards of the tabernacle. And he made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the side of the south, southward. And forty bases of silver he made under the twenty boards: two bases under the one board for its two tenons, and two bases under the one board for its two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle, for the north side, he made twenty boards, and their forty bases **of** silver: two bases under the one board, and two bases under the one board. And for the rear of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. And two boards he made for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. And they were doubled from below, and together they were complete to its top, to the one ring; so he did for both of them, for the two corners. And there were eight boards, and their bases **of** silver, sixteen bases, two bases, two bases under the one board. And he made bars of acacia wood, five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the rear, westward. And he made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from end to end. And the boards he overlaid **with** gold, and their rings he made **of** gold, housings for the bars; and he overlaid the bars **with** gold.*

"And he made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright." This section repeats 26:15-30. Each board was about fifteen feet tall and two and a quarter feet wide, with two tenons, or pegs, at the bottom. Each tenon fit into a silver base. There were twenty boards on the south side, twenty on the north, six at the back on the west, and two for the corners, all resting on silver bases, a hundred bases in all (38:27).

Five bars ran along each side and the back, with a middle bar that ran "through in the midst of the boards from end to end." The boards and bars were covered with gold and held by gold rings.

The silver for the bases came from the atonement money (30:11-16; 38:25-27). The whole house of God stood on the ransom price of His people. Gold-covered wood standing on silver: many have seen in this a picture of a people redeemed and made fit to be God's dwelling. Paul says believers are "being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).

**36:35-38** *And he made the veil **of** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he made it, **with** cherubim. And he made for it four pillars of acacia, and he overlaid them **with** gold, their hooks **of** gold; and he cast for them four bases of silver. And he made a screen for the entrance of the tent **of** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer, and its five pillars and their hooks; and he overlaid their tops and their bands **with** gold; and their five bases **were of** bronze.*

"And he made the veil of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he made it, with cherubim." The veil hung on four gold-covered pillars on silver bases, between the Holy Place and the holy of holies. As we saw at 26:31-35, it kept everyone out of the holy of holies except the high priest once a year, and it was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19-20).

"And he made a screen for the entrance of the tent of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, the work of an embroiderer." The screen hung on five pillars with gold tops and bronze bases, as in 26:36-37. It was the one way into the tent.

The order of the work is worth noticing. In chapters 25 to 27, God began with the ark, at the center, and worked outward, because He was showing His heart: His presence first. Here the builders begin with the tent and its frame, because that is the order a builder follows. You need a house before you can furnish it. Both orders were right for their purpose.

## Chapter 36 Summary

Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled worker whom the LORD had given wisdom came to do the work, and they received from Moses all the offerings the people had brought. The people kept bringing freewill offerings every morning until the workers told Moses there was more than enough. Moses had a message sent through the camp telling everyone to stop, and the people stopped bringing. The workers made the ten linen curtains of the tabernacle with cherubim, joined with loops of blue and gold clasps, then eleven curtains of goats' hair joined with bronze clasps, and coverings of rams' skins dyed red and dolphin skins. They made the upright boards of acacia wood with tenons set in silver bases, twenty for each long side and eight for the back, with bars along each side and a middle bar running from end to end, all covered with gold. They made the veil of blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen with cherubim, hung on four gold-covered pillars with silver bases, and the embroidered screen for the entrance on five pillars with gold tops and bronze bases.

## Chapter 36 Study Questions

1. What two things marked the workers who came to build? (36:2)

2. How often did the people bring gifts, and what problem did this cause? (36:3-5)

3. What did the workers do when they had more than enough, and what did Moses command? (36:5-7)

4. How do verses 8-19 compare with 26:1-14, and what is the one big difference?

5. What were the bases of the boards made of, and where did that silver come from? (36:24; 30:11-16; 38:25-27)

6. What happened to the veil when Jesus died, and what does it mean for us? (36:35; Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19-20)

7. Why might God's commands start with the ark while the builders started with the tent?

8. Forgiven Israel gave more than enough. How has God's forgiveness changed the way you give?

9. James 1:22 tells us to be doers of the word. What is one thing God has told you to do that you have only heard so far?

10. The workers were honest when they had more than they needed. Where could you be more honest and open with what God has given you?

# Chapter 37: The Ark and the Furnishings Made

## Scripture

**37:1-16** And Bezalel made the ark ***of*** acacia wood: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) ***was*** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And he overlaid it ***with*** pure gold from inside and from outside, and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And he cast for it four rings of gold on its four feet, and two rings on its one side, and two rings on its second side. And he made poles of acacia wood, and he overlaid them ***with*** gold. And he brought the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark. And he made a mercy seat of pure gold: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) ***was*** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth. And he made two cherubim of gold; ***of*** hammered work he made them, from the two ends of the mercy seat, one cherub from the end on this ***side***, and one cherub from the end on that ***side***; from the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim were spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces ***were*** each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim. And he made the table ***of*** acacia wood: approximately 3 feet (two cubits) ***was*** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And he overlaid it ***with*** pure gold, and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And he made for it a rim of approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth) all around, and he made a molding of gold for its rim all around. And he cast for it four rings of gold, and he put the rings on the four corners which ***belonged*** to its four feet. Close to the rim were the rings, housings for the poles to carry the table. And he made the poles ***of*** acacia wood, and he overlaid them ***with*** gold, to carry the table. And he made the articles which ***were*** on the table, its dishes and its pans and its bowls, and the jugs with which ***drink offerings*** were poured out, ***of*** pure gold.

**37:17-29** And he made the lampstand ***of*** pure gold; ***of*** hammered work he made the lampstand; its base and its shaft, its cups, its bulbs, and its blossoms were from it. And six branches ***were*** coming out from its sides: three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its second side; three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; and three cups, almond-shaped, on one branch, a bulb and a blossom; so for the six branches which came out from the lampstand. And on the lampstand ***were*** four cups, almond-shaped, its bulbs and its blossoms; and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, for the six branches which came out from it. Their bulbs and their branches were from it; all of it ***was*** one hammered work of pure gold. And he made its lamps, seven, and its tongs and its fire pans, ***of*** pure gold. ***Of*** approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of pure gold he made it, and all its articles. And he made the altar of incense ***of*** acacia wood: approximately 18 inches (a cubit) ***was*** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, square; and approximately 3 feet (two cubits) its height; its horns were from it. And he overlaid it ***with*** pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns; and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And two rings of gold he made for it under its molding, on its two sides, on its two sides, for housings for poles to carry it by them. And

he made the poles ***of*** acacia wood, and he overlaid them ***with*** gold. And he made the oil of the anointing, holy, and the incense of the fragrances, pure, the work of a perfumer.

## Chapter 37 Preview

With the tent built, Bezalel makes the furniture for the inside. First comes the ark of the covenant with its mercy seat and two golden cherubim. Then the table for the bread of the Presence, the golden lampstand with its seven lamps, and the golden altar of incense. Last, he makes the holy anointing oil and the incense.

Every item matches what God described in chapters 25 and 30, measure for measure. I have explained each one there, so here I will keep the notes short and point back. As you read, notice the name at the start of the chapter. Bezalel himself made the ark. The most holy object was made by the man God had filled with His Spirit and called by name.

## Chapter 37 Study

**37:1-9** *And Bezalel made the ark **of** acacia wood: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) **was** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And he overlaid it **with** pure gold from inside and from outside, and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And he cast for it four rings of gold on its four feet, and two rings on its one side, and two rings on its second side. And he made poles of acacia wood, and he overlaid them **with** gold. And he brought the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark. And he made a mercy seat of pure gold: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) **was** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth. And he made two cherubim of gold; **of** hammered work he made them, from the two ends of the mercy seat, one cherub from the end on this **side**, and one cherub from the end on that **side**; from the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim were spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces **were** each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim.*

"And Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood." The ark was about three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches wide and high, covered with pure gold inside and out, with a gold molding, four gold rings and two gold-covered poles. This matches 25:10-16, where we saw that the ark held the tablets of the testimony and was carried, never touched.

"And he made a mercy seat of pure gold," the lid of the ark, with two cherubim of hammered gold, one at each end. "And the cherubim were spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces were each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim." This matches 25:17-22. There we saw that the mercy seat was the place where blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement, and that Paul calls Christ our propitiation using the same word (Romans 3:25).

One detail is missing here that was in chapter 25: the promise, "I will meet with you there" (25:22). The ark was only a box until God came to it. That will happen in chapter 40. A beautiful

church building, a fine choir, or a well-planned service is not the same as God's presence. We build and prepare, but only God can come and fill.

**37:10-16** *And he made the table **of** acacia wood: approximately 3 feet (two cubits) **was** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And he overlaid it **with** pure gold, and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And he made for it a rim of approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth) all around, and he made a molding of gold for its rim all around. And he cast for it four rings of gold, and he put the rings on the four corners which **belonged** to its four feet. Close to the rim were the rings, housings for the poles to carry the table. And he made the poles **of** acacia wood, and he overlaid them **with** gold, to carry the table. And he made the articles which **were** on the table, its dishes and its pans and its bowls, and the jugs with which **drink offerings** were poured out, **of** pure gold.*

"And he made the table of acacia wood," about three feet long, eighteen inches wide and two feet three inches high, covered with pure gold, with a rim about three inches wide, a gold molding, rings and poles. On it went its dishes, pans, bowls and jugs for drink offerings, all of pure gold. This matches 25:23-30.

The table held the bread of the Presence, twelve loaves always before the LORD, one for each tribe. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). God's table was always set. In Christ, God still provides for His people every day.

**37:17-24** *And he made the lampstand **of** pure gold; **of** hammered work he made the lampstand; its base and its shaft, its cups, its bulbs, and its blossoms were from it. And six branches **were** coming out from its sides: three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its second side; three cups, almond-shaped, on the one branch, a bulb and a blossom; and three cups, almond-shaped, on one branch, a bulb and a blossom; so for the six branches which came out from the lampstand. And on the lampstand **were** four cups, almond-shaped, its bulbs and its blossoms; and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, and a bulb under the two branches from it, for the six branches which came out from it. Their bulbs and their branches were from it; all of it **was** one hammered work of pure gold. And he made its lamps, seven, and its tongs and its fire pans, **of** pure gold. **Of** approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of pure gold he made it, and all its articles.*

"And he made the lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work he made the lampstand." It had a center shaft and six branches, with cups shaped like almond blossoms, bulbs and flowers, "all of it was one hammered work of pure gold." Its seven lamps and its tongs and fire pans were also of pure gold. It took about seventy-five pounds of gold, a talent. This matches 25:31-40.

The lampstand was the only light in the Holy Place. Jesus is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). It was hammered out of one piece of gold, beaten into shape. Some have seen in this a picture of Christ, who was beaten and bruised for us and became our light. The New Testament does not say that about the lampstand, so I give it only as a picture.

**37:25-29** *And he made the altar of incense **of** acacia wood: approximately 18 inches (a cubit) **was** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, square; and approximately 3 feet (two cubits) its height; its horns were from it. And he overlaid it **with** pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns; and he made for it a molding of gold all around. And two rings of gold he made for it under its molding, on its two sides, on its two sides, for housings for poles to carry it by them. And he made the poles **of** acacia wood, and he overlaid them **with** gold. And he made the oil of the anointing, holy, and the incense of the fragrances, pure, the work of a perfumer.*

"And he made the altar of incense of acacia wood," about eighteen inches square and three feet high, with horns, covered with pure gold, with a gold molding, rings and poles. This matches 30:1-5. It stood in front of the veil, where incense rose every morning and evening as a picture of prayer (30:6-8; Revelation 8:3-4).

"And he made the oil of the anointing, holy, and the incense of the fragrances, pure, the work of a perfumer." These were made by the recipes in 30:22-38. The anointing oil would set apart the tabernacle, its furniture and its priests. The incense would rise before the LORD.

Notice that every item in this chapter was gold. Inside the tent, everything shone. Outside, in the courtyard, things were bronze, as chapter 38 will show. The closer one came to God, the more precious the materials became. God's holiness was displayed in His house in a way anyone could see.

## Chapter 37 Summary

Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold inside and out, with a gold molding, four gold rings and gold-covered poles to carry it. He made the mercy seat of pure gold and two cherubim of hammered gold at its ends, with wings spread upward over the mercy seat and faces turned toward it. He made the table of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with a rim, molding, rings and poles, and its dishes, pans, bowls and jugs of pure gold. He made the lampstand of one piece of hammered pure gold, with six branches decorated with almond-shaped cups, bulbs and blossoms, seven lamps, and tongs and fire pans, from a talent of gold. He made the altar of incense of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with horns, molding, rings and poles. He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense, the work of a perfumer.

## Chapter 37 Study Questions

1. Who made the ark, and why might it matter that his name is given? (37:1; 31:2-3)

2. Which way did the cherubim face, and what was the mercy seat for? (37:9; 25:17-22)

3. What promise from 25:22 is not repeated here, and when is it fulfilled? (40:34-35)

4. What was the table for, and how does Jesus fulfill its meaning? (37:10-16; John 6:35)

5. How was the lampstand made, and how much gold did it take? (37:17-24)

6. What two things did Bezalel make at the end of the chapter, and what were they used for? (37:29; 30:22-38)

7. Why do you think the furniture inside the tent was gold, while the courtyard furniture was bronze?

8. A beautiful building is not the same as God's presence. How do you make sure your worship is about meeting God, not just the setting?

9. Jesus is the bread of life and the light of the world. Which of these do you need from Him most this week?

10. The incense rose every morning and evening. What would help you keep a steady habit of prayer?

# Chapter 38: The Altar, the Courtyard, and the Metals

## Scripture

**38:1-20** And he made the altar of burnt offering ***of*** acacia wood: approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) ***was*** its length, and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) its breadth, square; and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) its height. And he made its horns on its four corners; its horns were from it; and he overlaid it ***with*** bronze. And he made all the articles of the altar, the pots and the shovels and the bowls, the forks and the fire pans; all its articles he made ***of*** bronze. And he made for the altar a grating, a work of network of bronze, under its ledge from below, to its middle. And he cast four rings on the four ends of the grating of bronze, housings for the poles. And he made the poles ***of*** acacia wood, and he overlaid them ***with*** bronze. And he brought the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, to carry it by them; hollow, ***of*** planks, he made it. And he made the laver ***of*** bronze and its base ***of*** bronze, with the mirrors of the serving ***women*** who served ***at*** the entrance of the tent of meeting. And he made the courtyard: for the side of the south, southward, the hangings of the courtyard ***were of*** twisted fine linen, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit); their pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, ***of*** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver. And for the side of the north, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit); their pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, ***of*** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver. And for the side of the west, hangings of approximately 75 feet (fifty by the cubit); their pillars ten, and their bases ten; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver. And for the side of the east, eastward, approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits). Hangings of approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits) ***were*** for the wing; their pillars three, and their bases three. And for the second wing, on this ***side*** and on that ***side*** of the gate of the courtyard, hangings of approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits); their pillars three, and their bases three. All the hangings of the courtyard all around ***were of*** twisted fine linen. And the bases for the pillars ***were of*** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands ***of*** silver, and the overlay of their tops ***of*** silver; and they ***were*** banded ***with*** silver, all the pillars of the courtyard. And the screen of the gate of the courtyard ***was*** the work of an embroiderer, ***of*** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) ***was*** the length, and the height in breadth approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), corresponding to the hangings of the courtyard. And their pillars ***were*** four, and their bases four, ***of*** bronze; their hooks ***of*** silver, and the overlay of their tops and their bands ***of*** silver. And all the pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard all around ***were of*** bronze.

**38:21-31** These ***are*** the counts of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which were counted at the command of Moses, the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. And Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD had commanded Moses. And with him ***was*** Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a designer and an embroiderer in the blue and in the purple and in the crimson scarlet and in the fine linen. All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the holy place, and it was the gold of the wave offering, ***was*** approximately 2,200 pounds (twenty-nine talents) and approximately 18 pounds (seven hundred and thirty shekels), by the shekel of the holy place. And the silver of those enrolled of the congregation ***was*** approximately 7,500 pounds (a hundred

talents) and approximately 44 pounds (a thousand and seven hundred and seventy-five shekels), by the shekel of the holy place: approximately 1/5 ounce (a beka) for the head, the half of the shekel by the shekel of the holy place, for everyone who passed over to those enrolled, from a son of twenty years and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. And the approximately 7,500 pounds (the hundred talents) of silver were for casting the bases of the holy place and the bases of the veil: a hundred bases for the approximately 7,500 pounds (the hundred talents), approximately 75 pounds (a talent) for a base. And ***with*** the approximately 44 pounds (the thousand and seven hundred and seventy-five ***shekels***) he made hooks for the pillars, and he overlaid their tops and banded them. And the bronze of the wave offering ***was*** approximately 5,250 pounds (seventy talents) and approximately 60 pounds (two thousand and four hundred shekels). And he made with it the bases of the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the altar of bronze, and the grating of bronze which ***belonged*** to it, and all the articles of the altar, and the bases of the courtyard all around, and the bases of the gate of the courtyard, and all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs of the courtyard all around.

## Chapter 38 Preview

Bezalel now moves outside the tent to the courtyard. He makes the bronze altar of burnt offering, where the sacrifices were offered, and the bronze laver, made from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then the workers make the courtyard: linen hangings on pillars all around, with a colorful screen for the gate. All of this repeats 27:1-19 and 30:17-21, and I will point back to those places.

The chapter ends with an account of the metals used. Moses gives the weight of the gold, silver and bronze, and tells what each was used for. It reads like a builder's report, and that is what it is. God's work was done honestly and openly, with a record anyone could check. The silver came from the atonement money paid by 603,550 men.

## Chapter 38 Study

**38:1-7** *And he made the altar of burnt offering **of** acacia wood: approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **was** its length, and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) its breadth, square; and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) its height. And he made its horns on its four corners; its horns were from it; and he overlaid it **with** bronze. And he made all the articles of the altar, the pots and the shovels and the bowls, the forks and the fire pans; all its articles he made **of** bronze. And he made for the altar a grating, a work of network of bronze, under its ledge from below, to its middle. And he cast four rings on the four ends of the grating of bronze, housings for the poles. And he made the poles **of** acacia wood, and he overlaid them **with** bronze. And he brought the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, to carry it by them; hollow, **of** planks, he made it.*

"And he made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood," about seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet high, with horns on its four corners, overlaid with bronze. All its tools, the pots, shovels, bowls, forks and fire pans, were bronze. It had a bronze grating, rings and bronze-covered poles. It was "hollow, of planks." This matches 27:1-8.

This altar was the first thing a worshiper met when he came through the gate. Before anyone could go further toward God, there had to be a sacrifice. As we saw in chapter 27, it points to the cross. There is no way to God except through the death of a substitute. "Apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

**38:8** *And he made the laver **of** bronze and its base **of** bronze, with the mirrors of the serving **women** who served **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting.*

"And he made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, with the mirrors of the serving women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting." This is a new detail. In 30:17-21 we learned what the laver was for, the priests washing their hands and feet. Here we learn what it was made from.

Mirrors in those days were made of polished bronze. Some women served at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Scripture does not tell us exactly what they did, though 1 Samuel 2:22 mentions them again. These women gave up their mirrors, something they used every day to look at themselves, so the priests could be washed. They gave up looking at themselves so that others could be made clean before God.

God's Word is called a mirror in James 1:23-25. It shows us what we are, and it leads us to the cleansing God provides.

**38:9-20** *And he made the courtyard: for the side of the south, southward, the hangings of the courtyard **were of** twisted fine linen, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit); their pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, **of** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver. And for the side of the north, approximately 150 feet (a hundred by the cubit); their pillars twenty, and their bases twenty, **of** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver. And for the side of the west, hangings of approximately 75 feet (fifty by the cubit); their pillars ten, and their bases ten; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver. And for the side of the east, eastward, approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits). Hangings of approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits) **were** for the wing; their pillars three, and their bases three. And for the second wing, on this **side** and on that **side** of the gate of the courtyard, hangings of approximately 22.5 feet (fifteen cubits); their pillars three, and their bases three. All the hangings of the courtyard all around **were of** twisted fine linen. And the bases for the pillars **were of** bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands **of** silver, and the overlay of their tops **of** silver; and they **were** banded **with** silver, all the pillars of the courtyard. And the screen of the gate of the courtyard **was** the work of an embroiderer, **of** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) **was** the length, and the height in breadth approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), corresponding to the hangings of the courtyard. And their pillars **were** four, and their bases four, **of** bronze; their hooks **of** silver, and the overlay of their tops and their bands **of** silver. And all the pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard all around **were of** bronze.*

"And he made the courtyard." This section repeats 27:9-19. The courtyard was about 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, enclosed by hangings of fine linen about seven and a half feet high, on pillars with bronze bases and silver hooks and bands. On the south and north were twenty pillars each,

on the west ten. On the east, the gate side, hangings of about twenty-two and a half feet stood on each side of the gate.

"And the screen of the gate of the courtyard was the work of an embroiderer, of blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen," about thirty feet wide, on four pillars. All the pegs were bronze.

As we saw in chapter 27, the white linen wall told everyone outside that God is holy and that sinners cannot simply walk in. But there was a gate, wide and bright. Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved" (John 10:9). There was one way in, and it was open to all who would come God's way.

**38:21-23** *These **are** the counts of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which were counted at the command of Moses, the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. And Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD had commanded Moses. And with him **was** Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a designer and an embroiderer in the blue and in the purple and in the crimson scarlet and in the fine linen.*

"These are the counts of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which were counted at the command of Moses, the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest." Here begins the record of the materials. It was kept by the Levites under Ithamar, Aaron's son. Later Ithamar would oversee the Levites who carried the tabernacle (Numbers 4:28, 33).

"And Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD had commanded Moses. And with him was Oholiab." The two master craftsmen are named again. They did all that God commanded.

Why include an accounting? Because God's work should be done honestly. Paul took care in handling money given for God's people, "providing good things not only before the Lord but also before men" (2 Corinthians 8:21). Churches and ministries today should keep clear and open records too.

**38:24-31** *All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the holy place, and it was the gold of the wave offering,* ***was*** *approximately 2,200 pounds (twenty-nine talents) and approximately 18 pounds (seven hundred and thirty shekels), by the shekel of the holy place. And the silver of those enrolled of the congregation* ***was*** *approximately 7,500 pounds (a hundred talents) and approximately 44 pounds (a thousand and seven hundred and seventy-five shekels), by the shekel of the holy place: approximately 1/5 ounce (a beka) for the head, the half of the shekel by the shekel of the holy place, for everyone who passed over to those enrolled, from a son of twenty years and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. And the approximately 7,500 pounds (the hundred talents) of silver were for casting the bases of the holy place and the bases of the veil: a hundred bases for the approximately 7,500 pounds (the hundred talents), approximately 75 pounds (a talent) for a base. And* ***with*** *the approximately 44 pounds (the thousand and seven hundred and seventy-five* ***shekels****) he made hooks for the pillars, and he overlaid their tops and banded them. And the bronze of the wave offering* ***was*** *approximately 5,250 pounds (seventy talents) and approximately 60 pounds (two thousand and four hundred shekels). And he made with it the bases of the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the altar of bronze, and the grating of bronze which* ***belonged*** *to it, and all the articles of the altar, and the bases of the courtyard all around, and the bases of the gate of the courtyard, and all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs of the courtyard all around.*

"All the gold that was used for the work," the gold of the wave offering, came to twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels, about 2,200 pounds. Gold was used for the furniture inside the tent and to cover the boards and bars.

"And the silver of those enrolled of the congregation" came to a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels, about 7,500 pounds. It was the half shekel paid by every man twenty and older, "for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty," that is, 603,550 men. This is the same number given in the census of Numbers 1:46. As we saw at 12:37, some scholars read the Hebrew word for thousand as a clan or unit and so get a smaller number, but I take the numbers as written.

The silver was used for the hundred bases under the boards and the veil, a talent for each base, about seventy-five pounds, and the rest for the hooks and bands of the courtyard pillars. As we saw at 30:11-16 and 36:20-34, the house of God stood on the price of redemption.

"And the bronze of the wave offering was approximately 5,250 pounds (seventy talents)" and 2,400 shekels. It made the bases of the entrance, the bronze altar and its grating and tools, the bases of the courtyard pillars and gate, and all the pegs.

That is a great deal of metal for a nation of former slaves. Where did it come from? Much of it from Egypt (12:35-36). God gave it to them before He asked for it. And the giving was so generous that the people had to be told to stop (36:6-7). Every ounce of God's house was a gift.

## Chapter 38 Summary

Bezalel made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood overlaid with bronze, square, with horns at its corners, a bronze grating, rings and poles, and all its tools of bronze. He made the bronze

laver and its base from the bronze mirrors of the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting. He made the courtyard with hangings of fine linen on pillars with bronze bases and silver hooks and bands: a hundred cubits on the south and north, fifty on the west, and on the east hangings on either side of the gate. The screen for the gate was embroidered in blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen, on four pillars. All the pegs were bronze. Then Moses gave an account of the materials, recorded by the Levites under Ithamar son of Aaron, and named Bezalel and Oholiab as the builders. The gold came to twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels. The silver, paid as a half shekel by 603,550 men, came to a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels and was used for the hundred bases and the hooks and bands. The bronze came to seventy talents and 2,400 shekels and was used for the bases of the entrance and courtyard, the bronze altar and its grating and tools, and all the pegs.

## Chapter 38 Study Questions

1. Where did the bronze altar stand, and why did it come first for a worshiper entering the courtyard? (38:1-7; 27:1-8)

2. What was the laver made from, and who gave it? (38:8)

3. How does James 1:23-25 use a mirror as a picture of God's Word?

4. What did the courtyard gate look like, and how does Jesus fulfill it? (38:18; John 10:9)

5. Who kept the record of the materials, and why do you think God included it? (38:21)

6. How many men paid the half shekel, and what was the silver used for? (38:25-28)

7. Where did a nation of former slaves get all this gold, silver and bronze? (12:35-36)

8. The women gave up their mirrors so others could be washed. What could you give up so that others can draw near to God?

9. How does 2 Corinthians 8:21 apply to the way you or your church handle money given to God?

10. Every part of God's house was a gift. What has God given you first that you can give back to Him?

# Chapter 39: The Priestly Garments Made

## Scripture

**39:1-21** And from the blue and the purple and the crimson scarlet they made garments of woven work to minister in the holy place; and they made the garments of holiness which ***are*** for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he made the ephod ***of*** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. And they hammered out the thin plates of the gold, and he cut ***them into*** threads to work ***them*** in the midst of the blue and in the midst of the purple and in the midst of the crimson scarlet and in the midst of the fine linen, the work of a designer. Shoulder pieces they made for it, joined; at its two ends it was joined. And the band of its ephod which ***was*** on it, it ***was*** from it, like its work, ***of*** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the onyx stones, surrounded ***with*** filigree settings of gold, engraved ***with*** the engravings of a signet according to the names of the sons of Israel. And he put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he made the breastpiece, the work of a designer, like the work of the ephod: ***of*** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. It was square; folded double they made the breastpiece, approximately 9 inches (a span) its length and approximately 9 inches (a span) its breadth, folded double. And they filled in it four rows of stone: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl ***was*** the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper, surrounded ***with*** filigree settings of gold in their settings. And the stones ***were*** according to the names of the sons of Israel; they ***were*** twelve, according to their names, ***like*** the engravings of a signet, each according to his name, for the twelve tribes. And they made on the breastpiece braided chains, a work of cordage, ***of*** pure gold. And they made two filigree settings of gold and two rings of gold, and they put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. And they put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. And the two ends of the two cords they put on the two filigree settings, and they put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of its face. And they made two rings of gold, and they put ***them*** on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its edge which ***was*** toward the side of the ephod inward. And they made two rings of gold, and they put them on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod from below, from the front of its face, close to its joining, above the band of the ephod. And they bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, to be on the band of the ephod, and the breastpiece was not displaced from on the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**39:22-43** And he made the robe of the ephod, the work of a weaver, entirely ***of*** blue. And the opening of the robe ***was*** in its midst, like the opening of a coat of mail, an edge for its opening all around; it was not torn. And they made on the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson scarlet, twisted. And they made bells of pure gold, and they put the bells in the midst of the pomegranates on the hems of the robe all around, in the midst of the pomegranates: a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, on the hems of the robe all around, to minister ***in***, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the tunics ***of*** fine linen, the work of a weaver, for Aaron and for his sons, and the turban ***of*** fine linen, and the head-wraps of the

headdresses ***of*** fine linen, and the undergarments of linen ***of*** twisted fine linen, and the sash ***of*** twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet, the work of an embroiderer, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the plate of the crown of holiness ***of*** pure gold, and they wrote on it a writing, ***like*** the engravings of a signet: "Holiness to the LORD." And they put on it a lace of blue, to put ***it*** on the turban from above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And all the service of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its articles, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars and its bases; and the covering of skins of rams dyed red, and the covering of skins of dolphins, and the veil of the screen; the ark of the testimony and its poles, and the mercy seat; the table, all its articles, and the bread of the Presence; the pure lampstand, its lamps, the lamps of the arrangement, and all its articles, and the oil of the light; and the altar of gold, and the oil of the anointing, and the incense of the fragrances, and the screen of the entrance of the tent; the altar of bronze and the grating of bronze which ***was*** for it, its poles and all its articles, the laver and its base; the hangings of the courtyard, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the courtyard, its cords and its pegs, and all the articles of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; the garments of woven work to minister in the holy place, the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons to serve as priests. According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did all the service. And Moses saw all the work, and look, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, so they had done. And Moses blessed them.

## Chapter 39 Preview

The last things made are the holy garments for Aaron and his sons: the ephod with its onyx stones, the breastpiece with its twelve jewels, the blue robe with bells and pomegranates, the linen tunics, turbans and undergarments, and the gold plate engraved "Holiness to the LORD." All of this matches chapter 28, where each piece was explained.

One phrase runs through this chapter like a drumbeat: "just as the LORD had commanded Moses." It appears seven times in the making of the garments alone. Then the workers bring every finished piece to Moses. He inspects all the work, sees that they have done it just as the LORD commanded, and blesses them. After the golden calf, this is a beautiful picture of a people who have learned to obey.

## Chapter 39 Study

**39:1-7** *And from the blue and the purple and the crimson scarlet they made garments of woven work to minister in the holy place; and they made the garments of holiness which **are** for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he made the ephod **of** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. And they hammered out the thin plates of the gold, and he cut **them into** threads to work **them** in the midst of the blue and in the midst of the purple and in the midst of the crimson scarlet and in the midst of the fine linen, the work of a designer. Shoulder pieces they made for it, joined; at its two ends it was joined. And the band of its ephod which **was** on it, it **was** from it, like its work, **of** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the onyx stones, surrounded **with** filigree settings of gold, engraved **with** the engravings of a signet according to the names of the sons of Israel. And he put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And from the blue and the purple and the crimson scarlet they made garments of woven work to minister in the holy place; and they made the garments of holiness which are for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." This section matches 28:6-14.

One new detail tells us how the gold was worked into the ephod: "And they hammered out the thin plates of the gold, and he cut them into threads to work them in the midst of the blue and in the midst of the purple." The gold was beaten into thin sheets and cut into threads, then woven into the cloth with the colored yarn. It was slow, careful work.

The two onyx stones were set in gold and engraved with the names of the sons of Israel, and fastened on the shoulder pieces, "stones of memorial for the sons of Israel." As we saw in chapter 28, the high priest carried God's people on his shoulders before the LORD, a picture of Christ, who carries us.

**39:8-21** *And he made the breastpiece, the work of a designer, like the work of the ephod: **of** gold, blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen. It was square; folded double they made the breastpiece, approximately 9 inches (a span) its length and approximately 9 inches (a span) its breadth, folded double. And they filled in it four rows of stone: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl **was** the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper, surrounded **with** filigree settings of gold in their settings. And the stones **were** according to the names of the sons of Israel; they **were** twelve, according to their names, **like** the engravings of a signet, each according to his name, for the twelve tribes. And they made on the breastpiece braided chains, a work of cordage, **of** pure gold. And they made two filigree settings of gold and two rings of gold, and they put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. And they put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. And the two ends of the two cords they put on the two filigree settings, and they put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of its face. And they made two rings of gold, and they put **them** on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its edge which **was** toward the side of the ephod inward. And they made two rings of gold, and they put them on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod from below, from the front of its face, close to its joining, above the band of the ephod. And they bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, to be on the band of the ephod, and the breastpiece was not displaced from on the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And he made the breastpiece, the work of a designer, like the work of the ephod." The breastpiece was square, about nine inches each way, folded double, set with twelve stones in four rows, each engraved with the name of a tribe. This matches 28:15-28, almost word for word.

It was fastened with gold chains and rings and a lace of blue, so that "the breastpiece was not displaced from on the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." As we saw at 28:29-30, Aaron carried the names of God's people over his heart. Our High Priest carries us on His heart, and nothing can pull us loose (Romans 8:38-39).

Notice that the Urim and Thummim are not mentioned here. They were not made by the workers. Moses would put them into the breastpiece himself (28:30; Leviticus 8:8).

**39:22-31** *And he made the robe of the ephod, the work of a weaver, entirely **of** blue. And the opening of the robe **was** in its midst, like the opening of a coat of mail, an edge for its opening all around; it was not torn. And they made on the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson scarlet, twisted. And they made bells of pure gold, and they put the bells in the midst of the pomegranates on the hems of the robe all around, in the midst of the pomegranates: a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, on the hems of the robe all around, to minister **in**, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the tunics **of** fine linen, the work of a weaver, for Aaron and for his sons, and the turban **of** fine linen, and the head-wraps of the headdresses **of** fine linen, and the undergarments of linen **of** twisted fine linen, and the sash **of** twisted fine linen and blue and purple and crimson scarlet, the work of an embroiderer, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And they made the plate of the crown of holiness **of** pure gold, and they wrote on it a writing, **like** the engravings of a signet: "Holiness to the LORD." And they put on it a lace of blue, to put **it** on the turban from above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And he made the robe of the ephod, the work of a weaver, entirely of blue." It was woven in one piece with a strong edge around the neck, "it was not torn," with pomegranates and "bells of pure gold" around the hem. This matches 28:31-35. John 19:23 says Jesus' own tunic was "seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole," and the soldiers would not tear it.

Then came the linen tunics, the turban, the headdresses, the linen undergarments and the embroidered sash, as in 28:39-43.

"And they made the plate of the crown of holiness of pure gold, and they wrote on it a writing, like the engravings of a signet." The words were "Holiness to the LORD," as in 28:36-38. It was tied with a lace of blue to the front of the turban. Every garment was finished, and every one was made "just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Why does Moses repeat that phrase so often? Because in God's worship, obedience matters more than creativity. The workers were very skilled. They could have improved on God's design, or so they might have thought. They did not. Their skill served God's plan. The best gift we can bring to God is not our own ideas about how He should be worshiped, but faithful obedience to what He has said.

**39:32-43** *And all the service of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its articles, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars and its bases; and the covering of skins of rams dyed red, and the covering of skins of dolphins, and the veil of the screen; the ark of the testimony and its poles, and the mercy seat; the table, all its articles, and the bread of the Presence; the pure lampstand, its lamps, the lamps of the arrangement, and all its articles, and the oil of the light; and the altar of gold, and the oil of the anointing, and the incense of the fragrances, and the screen of the entrance of the tent; the altar of bronze and the grating of bronze which* ***was*** *for it, its poles and all its articles, the laver and its base; the hangings of the courtyard, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the courtyard, its cords and its pegs, and all the articles of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; the garments of woven work to minister in the holy place, the garments of holiness for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons to serve as priests. According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did all the service. And Moses saw all the work, and look, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, so they had done. And Moses blessed them.*

"And all the service of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did." The work was done. Scripture does not say how long it took. Israel reached Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (19:1), and the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year (40:17). After Moses' two stays of forty days on the mountain, that leaves about six months, perhaps less, for the work.

"And they brought the tabernacle to Moses." Verses 33-41 list every part: the tent and its frame, the coverings, the veil, the ark and mercy seat, the table and bread, the lampstand and oil, the golden altar, the anointing oil and incense, the screen, the bronze altar and laver, the courtyard hangings, pillars, cords and pegs, and the holy garments. It is the same list as in 35:10-19. Everything God asked for was there. Nothing was missing, and nothing was added.

"And Moses saw all the work, and look, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, so they had done. And Moses blessed them." These words sound like the end of the creation story, where God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31), and He finished His work and blessed the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). God made a world for people to live in. Now His people had made a house for God to live in.

Moses' blessing was a reward for faithful work. One day every believer's work will be inspected by the Lord Jesus. Paul says each one's work will become manifest (1 Corinthians 3:13). The words we hope to hear then are the words of Jesus' parable: "Well done, good and faithful slave" (Matthew 25:21).

## Chapter 39 Summary

From the blue, purple and scarlet yarn the workers made the holy garments for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. They made the ephod of gold, colored yarn and fine linen, hammering gold into thin plates and cutting it into threads to weave into the cloth, with shoulder

pieces and a woven band, and they set the two onyx stones engraved with the names of the sons of Israel on its shoulders. They made the breastpiece, square and folded double, with twelve stones in four rows, each engraved with the name of a tribe, and fastened it to the ephod with gold chains, rings and a lace of blue. They made the blue robe in one piece with pomegranates and bells of pure gold on its hem, the linen tunics, turban, headdresses and undergarments, the embroidered sash, and the gold plate of the holy crown engraved "Holiness to the LORD," tied to the turban with blue lace. So all the work of the tabernacle was finished. The people brought everything to Moses: the tent and all its parts, the furniture, the altars, the laver, the courtyard and the priests' garments. Moses saw that they had done all of it just as the LORD had commanded, and he blessed them.

## Chapter 39 Study Questions

1. How was the gold worked into the ephod? (39:3)

2. Whose names were on the onyx stones and on the twelve stones of the breastpiece? (39:6-7, 14)

3. What phrase is repeated again and again in this chapter, and why do you think Moses repeats it?

4. Why are the Urim and Thummim not in the list of things the workers made? (39:8-21; Leviticus 8:8)

5. What was written on the gold plate, and where was it worn? (39:30-31)

6. What did Moses do when the workers brought him the finished work? (39:43)

7. How do the words of 39:43 echo the end of the creation account in Genesis 1:31 and 2:2-3?

8. The workers used great skill but did not change God's design. Where are you tempted to improve on what God has said?

9. Jesus will one day inspect every believer's work (1 Corinthians 3:13). What work are you doing now that you hope He will call good and faithful?

10. Moses blessed those who did faithful work. Who in your church could you encourage this week for their faithful service?

# Chapter 40: The Glory Fills the Tabernacle

## Scripture

**40:1-16** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On the day of the first month, on the first ***day*** of the month, you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put there the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table, and you shall arrange its arrangement; and you shall bring in the lampstand, and you shall lift up its lamps. And you shall put the altar of gold for incense before the ark of the testimony, and you shall put the screen of the entrance for the tabernacle. And you shall put the altar of the burnt offering before the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And you shall set the courtyard all around, and you shall put the screen of the gate of the courtyard. And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall anoint the tabernacle and all that ***is*** in it, and you shall sanctify it and all its articles; and it shall be holy. And you shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its articles, and you shall sanctify the altar; and the altar shall be a holy of holies. And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and you shall sanctify it. And you shall bring near Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. And you shall clothe Aaron ***with*** the garments of holiness, and you shall anoint him, and you shall sanctify him, and he shall serve as priest to Me. And his sons you shall bring near, and you shall clothe them ***with*** tunics. And you shall anoint them just as you anointed their father, and they shall serve as priests to Me; and their anointing shall be for them a priesthood forever throughout their generations." And Moses did according to all that the LORD had commanded him; so he did.

**40:17-38** And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first ***day*** of the month, the tabernacle was set up. And Moses set up the tabernacle, and he put its bases, and he set its boards, and he put its bars, and he set up its pillars. And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle, and he put the covering of the tent on it from above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and he set the poles on the ark, and he put the mercy seat on the ark from above. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and he set the veil of the screen, and he screened the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the side of the tabernacle northward, outside the veil. And he arranged on it an arrangement of bread before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. And he lifted up the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the altar of gold in the tent of meeting before the veil. And he made incense of fragrances smoke on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he set the screen of the entrance for the tabernacle. And the altar of the burnt offering he set ***at*** the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and he offered up on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and he put water there for washing. And Moses and Aaron and his sons would wash their hands and their feet from it. When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they drew near to the altar, they would wash, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And

he set up the courtyard all around the tabernacle and the altar, and he put the screen of the gate of the courtyard. And Moses finished the work. And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting, for the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD had filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out in all their journeys. And if the cloud was not taken up, then they would not set out until the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD ***was*** over the tabernacle by day, and fire would be in it ***by*** night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel, in all their journeys.

## Chapter 40 Preview

Everything has been made. Now God tells Moses to set up the tabernacle on the first day of the first month, almost a year after Israel left Egypt. God gives the order: the ark behind the veil, the table, the lampstand and the golden altar in the Holy Place, the bronze altar and the laver in the courtyard. Then everything is to be anointed, and Aaron and his sons are to be washed, clothed and anointed as priests.

Moses does it all, and seven times we read that he did it "just as the LORD had commanded Moses." Then comes the moment the whole second half of Exodus has been building toward. The cloud covers the tent, and the glory of the LORD fills the tabernacle, so that even Moses cannot go in. God has come to live among His people. The book ends with the cloud leading Israel on all their journeys. John tells us where this story goes: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14).

## Chapter 40 Study

**40:1-8** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On the day of the first month, on the first **day** of the month, you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put there the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table, and you shall arrange its arrangement; and you shall bring in the lampstand, and you shall lift up its lamps. And you shall put the altar of gold for incense before the ark of the testimony, and you shall put the screen of the entrance for the tabernacle. And you shall put the altar of the burnt offering before the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And you shall set the courtyard all around, and you shall put the screen of the gate of the courtyard.*

"On the day of the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting." The first month was the month of the Passover (12:2). It had been nearly a year since Israel came out of Egypt. God chose a new year's day for a new beginning. Israel's year began with God dwelling among them.

God gave the order for setting it up. First the ark, screened by the veil. Then the table with its bread, the lampstand with its lamps lit, and the golden altar of incense in front of the ark, with the screen at the door. Then the bronze altar in front of the entrance and the laver between the altar and the tent, filled with water. Last, the courtyard and the screen of its gate.

The order starts at the center, with the ark, the place of God's presence, and moves outward. It is the same order God used when He first gave the plans in chapter 25. God's presence comes first, and everything else is arranged around it. Is that the order of our lives?

**40:9-16** *And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall anoint the tabernacle and all that **is** in it, and you shall sanctify it and all its articles; and it shall be holy. And you shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its articles, and you shall sanctify the altar; and the altar shall be a holy of holies. And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and you shall sanctify it. And you shall bring near Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. And you shall clothe Aaron **with** the garments of holiness, and you shall anoint him, and you shall sanctify him, and he shall serve as priest to Me. And his sons you shall bring near, and you shall clothe them **with** tunics. And you shall anoint them just as you anointed their father, and they shall serve as priests to Me; and their anointing shall be for them a priesthood forever throughout their generations." And Moses did according to all that the LORD had commanded him; so he did.*

"And you shall take the oil of the anointing, and you shall anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and you shall sanctify it and all its articles; and it shall be holy." The oil from 30:22-33 was used on everything: the tent, its furniture, the altar of burnt offering and the laver. Everything was set apart for God.

Then the priests. "And you shall bring near Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and you shall wash them with water." Aaron was to be dressed in the holy garments and anointed, "and he shall serve as priest to Me." His sons were to be clothed and anointed too, "and their anointing shall be for them a priesthood forever throughout their generations." This is the ordination described in chapter 29. Leviticus 8 tells how it was carried out.

"And Moses did according to all that the LORD had commanded him; so he did." This one sentence sums up the whole building section. Moses had once argued with God at the burning bush (4:13). Now he simply obeyed.

**40:17-19** *And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first **day** of the month, the tabernacle was set up. And Moses set up the tabernacle, and he put its bases, and he set its boards, and he put its bars, and he set up its pillars. And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle, and he put the covering of the tent on it from above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was set up." This is one of the few exact dates in Exodus. About 1445 B.C., in the desert below Mount Sinai, the house of God stood for the first time.

Moses set it up with his own hands: the bases, the boards, the bars and the pillars. "And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle, and he put the covering of the tent on it from above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." That is the first of seven times that phrase appears in this section. Every step was done God's way.

**40:20-21** *And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and he set the poles on the ark, and he put the mercy seat on the ark from above. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and he set the veil of the screen, and he screened the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

"And he took and put the testimony into the ark." The testimony was the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, the second set, which God had written after the first were broken (34:1, 28). Then Moses set the poles in place, put the mercy seat on top, brought the ark into the tent, and hung the veil to screen it, "just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Think about what was in that box. The law that Israel had broken with the golden calf. And over it, the mercy seat, where blood would be sprinkled. God's law was not thrown away, and His mercy covered it. That is the gospel in a picture: God's holy standard kept, and sinners forgiven through the blood.

**40:22-27** *And he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the side of the tabernacle northward, outside the veil. And he arranged on it an arrangement of bread before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. And he lifted up the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the altar of gold in the tent of meeting before the veil. And he made incense of fragrances smoke on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Moses put the table on the north side of the Holy Place, outside the veil, and "arranged on it an arrangement of bread before the LORD." He put the lampstand on the south side, opposite the table, "and he lifted up the lamps before the LORD." He put the golden altar in front of the veil, "and he made incense of fragrances smoke on it." Each time we read, "just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

Moses did more than set out furniture. He set out the bread, lit the lamps and burned the incense. The worship began right away. The house was not a museum. It was a place where God was served.

**40:28-33** *And he set the screen of the entrance for the tabernacle. And the altar of the burnt offering he set **at** the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and he offered up on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and he put water there for washing. And Moses and Aaron and his sons would wash their hands and their feet from it. When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they drew near to the altar, they would wash, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he set up the courtyard all around the tabernacle and the altar, and he put the screen of the gate of the courtyard. And Moses finished the work.*

Moses set up the screen at the entrance, then the altar of burnt offering at the door, and "he offered up on it the burnt offering and the grain offering." He put the laver between the tent and the altar, with water in it. "And Moses and Aaron and his sons would wash their hands and their feet from it. When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they drew near to the altar, they would wash." Finally he set up the courtyard and its gate.

"And Moses finished the work." These words echo Genesis 2:2, where God finished His work of creation. They also point ahead to the cross, where Jesus said, "It has been finished" (John 19:30). Moses finished building a tent where God would live among His people for a time. Jesus finished the work that brings God's people into His presence forever.

**40:34-35** *And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting, for the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD had filled the tabernacle.*

"And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." This is the climax of the book. The cloud that had led Israel out of Egypt (13:21-22), that stood between them and Pharaoh's army (14:19-20), and that covered Mount Sinai (24:15-18), now came down and settled on the tent. The glory of the LORD, the visible shining of His presence, filled the house. Later Jewish teachers called this glory the Shekinah, from a Hebrew word meaning to dwell.

Remember where Exodus began. Israel was in slavery, crying out, and it seemed that God was far away (2:23-25). Remember chapter 33, when God said He would not go with them because of their sin. Now, by His grace, God has come to live in the middle of the camp. The God who rescued them now dwells with them. That was the promise of 29:45: "And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them."

"And Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting, for the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD had filled the tabernacle." Even Moses, who had spoken with God face to face, could not enter. The glory was too great. The same thing would happen when Solomon dedicated the temple: "the priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:11).

How does this point to Christ? John wrote, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The word dwelt means pitched His tent. The glory that filled the tabernacle came to live among us in Jesus. Jesus called His own body a sanctuary (John 2:19-21). In the tabernacle, God's glory was behind a veil, and even Moses could not go in. In Jesus, the veil was torn, and now every believer has "confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

And God's dwelling goes further still. Paul says that believers, together, are "a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16). One day the story will be complete. John heard a loud voice say, "Look, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God" (Revelation 21:3). What began in a tent in the desert will end in the new Jerusalem, where there is no temple, "for the Lord God the Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22).

**40:36-38** *And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out in all their journeys. And if the cloud was not taken up, then they would not set out until the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD **was** over the tabernacle by day, and fire would be in it **by** night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel, in all their journeys.*

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out in all their journeys." The cloud now did more than sit on the tent. It guided them. When it lifted, they packed up and moved. "And if the cloud was not taken up, then they would not set out until the day that it was taken up." Numbers 9:15-23 tells how this worked during the years in the wilderness. Sometimes they stayed two days, sometimes a month, sometimes a year. They moved when God moved.

"For the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire would be in it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel, in all their journeys." Day and night, every person in the camp could look up and see that God was with them. Exodus does not end with Israel in the promised land. It ends with Israel on the road, with God in their midst. That is where every believer lives now: not yet home, but never alone. The Holy Spirit lives in us and leads us (Romans 8:14), and Jesus has promised, "I am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Do you wait for God to lead, or do you run ahead? Israel learned to move when the cloud moved and to stay when it stayed. That is still the way to walk with God.

## Chapter 40 Summary

The LORD told Moses to set up the tabernacle on the first day of the first month. He was to place the ark of the testimony behind the veil, bring in the table and the lampstand, put the golden altar of incense before the ark and the screen at the entrance, set the altar of burnt offering before the entrance and the laver between the tent and the altar, and set up the courtyard and its gate. He was to anoint the tabernacle and everything in it, wash Aaron and his sons, clothe them, and anoint them as priests forever. Moses did everything as the LORD commanded. In the first month of the second year, on the first day, he set up the tabernacle, put the testimony in the ark with the mercy seat on top, brought it in and hung the veil. He set the table with bread, lit the lamps, burned incense on the golden altar, set up the screen, offered burnt and grain offerings on the altar, placed the laver with water for washing, and set up the courtyard. So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle, and Moses could not go in. From then on, whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, Israel set out, and when it stayed, they stayed. The cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, with fire in it by night, before the eyes of all Israel in all their journeys.

I would love to have a cloud that tells me when to move and when to stay. I do not get that. I have to rely on prayer, and on watching how God answers or does not answer what I ask. Waiting on Him that way takes more patience than following a cloud, but He still leads.

## Chapter 40 Study Questions

1. On what day was the tabernacle set up, and how long had it been since Israel left Egypt? (40:2, 17; 12:2)

2. In what order did God tell Moses to set up the furniture, and why might that order matter? (40:3-8)

3. What phrase is repeated seven times in verses 17-33, and what does it tell us about Moses?

4. What did Moses put inside the ark, and what was placed over it? (40:20)

5. What happened when the work was finished, and why could Moses not enter the tent? (40:34-35)

6. How does John 1:14 connect the tabernacle with Jesus?

7. How did the cloud guide Israel on their journeys? (40:36-38; Numbers 9:15-23)

8. Moses could not enter the tent because of the glory, but believers can enter God's presence through Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). How often do you take that privilege for granted?

9. Israel's year began with God dwelling among them. What would it look like to put God at the center of your days, the way the ark was at the center of the camp?

10. Israel moved when the cloud moved and waited when it stayed. Is there a decision in your life where you need to wait for God's leading?

# Conclusion

Exodus begins with a people in chains and ends with a people led by the glory of God. In the first chapters, Israel cried out under the whip, and it seemed that God was far away. But He heard, He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He came down to rescue them. He sent Moses, judged Egypt, sheltered Israel under the blood of the Passover lamb, and brought them through the sea on dry ground. At Sinai He made them His own people and gave them His Law. Even after they broke His covenant with the golden calf, He forgave them, renewed the covenant, and came to live among them. The last picture in the book is the cloud over the tabernacle, by day and by night, "before the eyes of all the house of Israel, in all their journeys" (40:38).

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. Read that way, Exodus tells us what God is like. He is holy. No one could touch the mountain or walk behind the veil. He is just, and He judged Pharaoh and the golden calf. And He is merciful beyond anything we deserve. When Moses asked to see His glory, God proclaimed His own name: "The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in steadfast love and faithfulness" (34:6). Exodus also shows us the order of salvation. God rescued Israel first, and then He gave them His Law. The Law was never the way to be saved. It showed a saved people how to live, and it showed all of us how much we need a Savior.

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God and help you grow in your walk with Him. Every part of Exodus points to Jesus Christ. He is our Passover Lamb, whose blood turns away judgment (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is the true bread from heaven and the Rock that was struck for us. He is the great High Priest who carries our names on His heart and who offered Himself once for all. He is the One who did what Moses could only offer: He was cut off so that we could be written in God's book. And He is the glory that filled the tabernacle, come to live among us: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Israel was set free from Egypt by the blood of a lamb. We are set free from sin and death by the blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In the tabernacle, even Moses could not go in when the glory came. Through Jesus, the veil is torn, and every believer can draw near to God with confidence (Hebrews 10:19-22). The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

*Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God.*

*Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.*

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve with God's people, who are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

# Bibliography

The following source was consulted throughout this study. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

Green, Jay P., Sr. (ed.). The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English. Hendrickson Publishers, 1986 (2nd ed.; printing used 2005). ISBN 1-56563-977-4.