

In Thy Hands

Manual

Part 2





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Introduction

In this workbook, multimedia is used to make the Bible more visually enriched and understandable in user friendly English for young and old. This series is suitable for families at home as well as churches and schools.

It is of the utmost importance that children should know and learn about the Word of God. The texts from Scripture that are discussed, guide and determine the contents of the different lessons which are presented. The King James Bible (<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>), see QR code, was used in the workbook and therefore the King James Bible should be used to complete the assignments in the workbooks.



The complete package falls into three parts

Part 1

- Creation up to Noah
- Abram
- The Gospels: The announcement of the birth of Christ up to Peter's confession.

Part 2

- Isaac up to Joseph
- Moses up to Joshua
- The Book of Judges up to Saul
- The Gospels: Jesus leaves Galilee and the events occurring up to His arrest.

Part 3

- David and Saul
- Kings and prophets
- The Gospels: Jesus is sentenced by Pilate and the events up to His ascension
- Acts and the conclusion of God's revelation

The Instituut vir Christelike Onderwys (ICO) aspire to publish Biblically based school books and study guides. This Biblical teaching program is published in collaboration with the Akademie Reformatoriese Opleiding en Studies (Aros). We realise the importance of Biblical knowledge with regards to the Scriptures and therefore commit ourselves to improve this knowledge in our children, students and parents.

We all contribute to the expansion of the Kingdom of God worldwide and through the Holy Spirit our children, students and parents are equipped with extended knowledge and the necessary values and skills to serve our Saviour. This is accomplished when allowing ourselves to be His witnesses and to let His light shine through us in this world.

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1. Isaac and Rebekah, the birth of Esau and Jacob

Genesis 24 up to Genesis 27: 40

The Lord maintained his covenant with Abraham

God promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations. Abraham would have many descendants. That which God promise, He delivers. In this chapter we will focus on the following main ideas:

- For every believer God has a perfect volition.
- God guides man and woman to each other.
- God execute His plans and decisions, regardless of our sins and our rebellion against Him.

A bride for Isaac

Isaac was 37 years old when his mother, Sarah passed away. She was 127 years old at the time of her death in Kiriath-Arba. Abraham (her widower) bought a burial site from the Hittite, Ephron, for four hundred shekels of silver, and buried Sarah in the cave of the field at Machpelah.

Abraham was very old at that point in time (approximately 137 years old) and he did not want Isaac, his son, who at the time was still unmarried, to marry a girl from Canaan. The Canaanites worshiped false gods (idols), and a Canaanite woman could have seduced Isaac into idolatry. Abraham made a plan to get Isaac a good and pious wife. He put Eliezer, his servant, the oldest of his household and the one who supervised his belongings, under oath to fetch Isaac a wife from his (Abraham's) own people. Abraham promised Eliezer his servant that God would send his angel ahead of him to help him. Abraham knew that God would make Eliezer's way prosperous.

Eliezer took ten camels of Abraham as well as a variety of fine gifts and then he went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor, in Haran. The trip to Nahor lasted several weeks, and eventually Eliezer arrived at the water well one evening. It was at the time that the women would go out to draw water from the well. Eliezer prayed to God and asked God to show him who the right woman for Isaac was. God gave him the assurance that the girl who gave him and his camels' water would be the one who would become Isaac's wife.

Rebekah is chosen

Eliezer just finished his prayer when a very beautiful girl came to fill her jar with water. Eliezer went to her and asked her for a drink of water. She immediately lowered her jar from her shoulder and poured him water to drink. She also poured water into a drinking bowl for the camels. Eliezer then gave her a gold ring and two bracelets and asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She said to Eliezer, that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor and Milcah. Nahor was Abraham's brother and thus her father, Bethuel, was Isaac's cousin. Abraham's servant was convinced that he found the right wife for Isaac.

Rebekah invited Eliezer to stay the night with them. However, before dinner, Eliezer first explained the purpose of his visit to her father and brother. He told them that Abraham sent him to look for a wife for his son, Isaac. Bethuel and his family were very happy to learn about their uncle Abraham after so many years. They did not object to Rebekah going with Eliezer in order to marry Isaac. It was clear to them that this was what God desired.

Isaac marries Rebekah

The next morning Eliezer was in a haste to return to Abraham. Laban, the brother of Rebekah and her mother suggested that they should stay for a few days, maybe even up to ten days before they departed. Eliezer explained that there was a long journey ahead of them, that he chose to leave immediately, to which Rebekah agreed, and thus they departed on this long journey.

Rebekah met Isaac at Beer-lahai-roi where he lived in Negev, in the Southland. Isaac was alone in the field reflecting on his thoughts and it was already evening when he noticed the caravan with camels. Rebekah saw him and asked Eliezer who the man approaching them, was? Eliezer replied that it was Isaac, his master. Rebekah immediately covered her face, as was the custom for unmarried women at that time, and got off the camel, because it would not be acceptable to look down on her bridegroom from the camels' back when addressing him for the first time. God chose Rebekah and led her to Isaac. Isaac took her to his late mother, Sarah's tent and later married her, and thus in this way, Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother.

Isaac was Abraham's successor

After Sarah's death, Abraham remarried, and his new wife's name was Keturah. He had six more sons with her and he died at the age of 175 years.

His two oldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael, also buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, where they buried Sarah. Isaac inherited all his father's possessions. The Lord also confirmed the same covenant He made with Abraham, again with Isaac, as well as all the promises that also applied to Isaac¹.

Famine broke out in Canaan, and Isaac was obliged to go to Gerar in order to survive, this is where the king of the Philistines, Abimelech, lived. The men of Gerar noticed the beautiful Rebekah. Isaac, afraid to say that Rebekah was his wife, for he feared that someone would kill him to take her as his wife, lied and said that Rebekah was his sister. When Abraham (Isaac's father) was in a similar situation when in Egypt, he told half a truth when he said that Sarah was his sister, because they were half brother and sister, Terah was their father. However, this was not the case with Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah was not Isaac's sister. Isaac did not trust God to protect him and with a lie, he tried to ensure his own safety. Through the window, Abimelech saw Isaac playing with Rebekah and he (Abimelech) deduced from the way they played, that they were not brother and sister as Isaac claimed. Abimelech (a gentile) then admonished Isaac about his wrong conduct. Many years earlier, Pharaoh (also a gentile) had to admonish Abraham about his wrong conduct when he said that Sarah was his sister. Abimelech warned the men of his city not to touch Rebekah so that no blame could come upon his dominion.

Abimelech allowed Isaac to sow in his land, and God blessed him with an exceptionally vast harvest. Isaac's flocks expanded and he became a very rich man. The Philistines were envious of Isaac's prosperity, and Abimelech asked him to leave his land. Isaac then moved to the water wells at Gerar. Abraham dug those wells, but the Philistines later filled it up. Isaac dug the wells open again, but each time the Philistines claimed those wells for themselves. Isaac did not want trouble and to keep the peace, he moved on.

At a certain stage, King Abimelech visited Isaac with Ahuzzat (his adviser) and Phicol (the commander of his army). They realized that the Lord was with Isaac, and thus they made a covenant of peace with him. They wined

1 Genesis 26: 3-5

“Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

and dined with Isaac that night on the feast Isaac prepared for them and left the next morning. That day Isaac's servants told him the new well had water, and Isaac named the place Shibah; which could mean "seven" or "promise under oath." Isaac again found himself in Beersheba, in the south of Canaan, where Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech earlier².

Isaac, Rebekah, and the birth of their sons

Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years before Isaac was born. Isaac and Rebekah waited 20 years for the birth of their twin sons, Esau and Jacob. We read in the Bible that Isaac begged the Lord in prayer to give them children, because his wife was infertile and could not conceive. The Lord answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant. Her unborn babies pushed against each other while in her womb and she consulted the Lord about it. God told her that she would become the mother of two sons. Both the boys' descendants would become large nations, but one would be stronger than the other would; and the older brother would serve the younger brother. It was a strange statement but she remembered it.

The relationship between those two nations, whom had already pushed against each other in the womb, was constantly hostile towards each other. God continued his covenant of grace with Jacob, but not with Esau³. That battle culminated with the victory of Israel over the Edomites by David⁴. Esau was the father of the Edomites⁵.

The twins, Esau and Jacob, were poles apart. They did not look alike at all and one could not even guess they were twins. One baby had red hair all over his body, and his parents named him Esau, which means 'hairy'. His younger brother, who was born just after him, was holding onto Esau's heel.

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| 2 | Genesis 21: 32 | "Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech raised with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines." |
| 3 | Malachi 1: 2-3 | "I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." |
| 4 | 1 Kings 11: 15-16 | "For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, after he had killed every male in Edom (because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel, until he had cut down every male in Edom)" |
| 5 | Genesis 36: 9 | "And this is the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir." |

He seemed to be trying to stop Esau from being the firstborn. His parents therefore named him Jacob, which meant “heel grabber.”

Just like they differed in looks, so too did the twins Esau and Jacob, differ in personality. Esau was a man of the field and he was a cunning hunter. Jacob chose to stay home. He kept himself busy with stock farming and he lived in tents like his parents. Isaac loved Esau very much, for he liked the venison that Esau tastefully prepared. Rebekah, on the other hand, loved Jacob more, because he stayed with her.

Esau exchanged his birthright

Jacob desired Esau’s birthright, but from the revelation that Rebekah had already received from God before their birth, she knew that Jacob were God’s chosen one and not Esau. She probably told Jacob about this. However, they did not wait to see how God would fulfil his promise. No, Rebekah and Jacob plotted amongst themselves to obtain Esau’s birthright.

The birthright stipulated that Esau should inherit twice as much as Jacob does. One day he came back from the field, feeling very tired and terribly hungry. He found Jacob, while he was cooking a pot of delicious lentil soup. He desperately wanted to eat some of the soup, and Jacob consented, provided Esau had to sell him his birthright for that lentil soup. For Esau this was not a problem and he sold his birthright for a mess of that lentil soup and a promise to Jacob. Esau did not value his birthright and gave it up for an insignificant mess of pottage, a cup of soup. He took no notice of all the blessings associated with the birthright. Esau was the crude, indifferent and shortsighted one; He sold his claims as the father of God’s people. His descendants could have been a blessing to all the nations, but he scorned it!

Jacob also was in the wrong. He should have waited on the Lord for the blessing, but he did not want to wait. Take note that God reversed the order because Esau, the oldest brother was not the chosen one, but Jacob, the second son was (just as with Ishmael and Isaac).

At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite women from the land of Canaan. Isaac and Rebekah were very sad and worried about these marriages, because Esau’s wives did not worship God. They worshiped false gods like the Canaanites. It became clear that Esau did not trust God anymore and he did not fear God.

Isaac wanted to bless Esau

At Esau's wedding, Isaac was already a hundred years old and by that time, he was weak-sighted, so much so that he later became completely blind. Thus, he felt that he might die in the near future, which is why he sent Esau with his bow and arrow, to shoot him an antelope. Esau had to prepare the venison for Isaac so that he could eat it and afterwards he would bless Esau.

A blessing by one of the patriarchs, which we already read about from Noah, had a prophetic depiction, because through the blessing, God revealed what would happen in the future. In the presence of the Lord, they blessed someone, which expressed their faith⁶. The benediction of the birthright was according to God's will; however, Isaac was obstinate and guided by his love and preference of Esau and not by the will of God.

Jacob deceived his father

In the meantime, Esau forgot that he sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage (lentil soup) and wanted the blessing for himself. Rebekah heard everything, and while Esau was in the field to hunt, she told Jacob everything. Rebekah instructed Jacob to kill two fine goats, so that she could cook Isaac a good meal. Jacob then had to take the food cooked by Rebekah for Isaac, so that his father could eat thereof and bless him afterward. Jacob had no objection but he was afraid that his father would discover their deceit and then curse him instead of giving him a blessing. Rebekah reassured Jacob by saying that she would take the curse on her. She then let Jacob put some of Esau's clothes on, and this would mean that Jacob would smell like Esau. She proceeded to pull the skins of the goats over his hands and neck, because this would make him feel hairy like Esau. Then Rebekah sent Jacob to his blind father with a good meal and bread.

Isaac asked in surprise, "Who are you, my son?" Jacob replied that he was Esau and with that lie, he took the blessing, meant for Esau, for himself. He told Isaac that he had done what his father commanded him to do and that he (Isaac) should eat some of the venison, in order for his father to bless him. This made Isaac suspicious and he asked, "How did you get it so soon?" to which Jacob answered piously although falsely, that "the Lord your God has made it happen." This was how one lie, was followed by another. Isaac was still not satisfied and wanted to touch Jacob first to make sure he was

6 Hebrews 11: 20

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

hairy. The voice was Jacob's voice, but the hands felt like Esau's hands. Rebekah's cunning plan worked. For a second time Isaac asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" to which Jacob responded that he was indeed Esau. Isaac believed him and did not realise that it was Jacob betraying him.

Isaac blessed Jacob

After Isaac finished eating, he kissed Jacob and again he smelled Esau's clothes on Jacob. This convinced Isaac that it was indeed Esau and he pronounced the benediction of the birthright onto Jacob. Isaac wished the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine on Jacob. Peoples would serve him, nations would bow down to him and he would rule over his brothers.

Upon Esau's return, he also prepared a delicious, savoury meal for his father. However, when he brought it to his father, he realized that Jacob had already received the blessing meant for him in a very deceitful way. He was in a terrible state over this and pleaded with his father to bless him too. Isaac also blessed the weeping Esau, but he could not take the benediction of birthright from Jacob, that remained valid. Esau's dwelling place would not be from the fertility of the earth, but he would live in the dry, barren countryside where he would live off his sword and he would serve his brother. Later, with great effort, Esau's descendants would be able to free themselves from the rule of Jacob's descendants.

Isaac sinned when he tried to bless Esau, because Jacob was the one chosen by God. Rebekah and Jacob sinned when they deceived Isaac and yet despite the sins of people, God still carried out his decision. Even when people are unfaithful to God, He remains faithful to the promises He makes.

Recommended reading

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2. Jacob, Jacob's flight to Laban and Jacob living with Laban

Genesis 27: 41 up to Genesis 33:17

God always protects the chosen

God's mercy is infinite and boundless. He protects those whom He has chosen even though they transgress. In this chapter we will focus on the following main ideas:

- Sin destroys relationships.
- God cares for the chosen ones, even when they sin.
- God transform and mould His children to enable them to draw near unto God.

Jacob's escape to Laban

Jacob received Isaac's blessing in a fraudulent and dishonest way, which means that it was sin and the consequences of this sin had horrible and extensive repercussions. Esau wanted to take revenge because of his hatred for his brother Jacob, and he decided to kill Jacob after the death of his father. Rebekah heard about Esau's plans, and was greatly troubled. If Esau killed Jacob, he would probably also be killed for the murder of his brother. This meant that there was a possibility that she could lose both of her sons!

Rebekah saw only one way out; Jacob had to flee and thus she told him about his brother, Esau's plans. She told him to flee to Haran where her brother Laban, lived and in this way Jacob would escape the wrath of Esau and then she would let him know when Esau's anger had subsided and it was safe to return. Time was of the essence. Isaac was very old and could die any day. Jacob had to flee from the land that God had promised them, because of his sin. Rebekah persuaded Isaac that Jacob had to go to her family in Haran to find a wife for him. Isaac agreed herewith, and thus he ordered Jacob not to marry a woman from Canaan. He had to go to Haran and marry a woman from Rebekah's family.

Isaac repeated the benediction of birthright, which he had pronounced on a previous occasion, on Jacob. Jacob bid his parents farewell and left for Haran. It was a very sad farewell for Rebekah and although she did not know

it at the time, it was the last time she would ever see her darling son. Jacob returned after she passed away but the dying Isaac did see his son upon his return, years later.

Jacob's dream

Jacob made his way to Haran, which is more than 800 km, on foot. He was a fugitive and had no camels to ride on. After a few days, he arrived at a certain place, which was about 96 km away from his parents' house. He decided to stay overnight because it was already late. He picked up a stone to use it as a pillow.

That night the Lord appeared to him in a dream. He saw a long ladder reaching from the heavens down to the earth. Angels went up and down on the ladder, while the Lord stood at the top of the ladder. He heard the voice of the Lord assuring him that He would be with him. God made the same covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac with Jacob. Jacob woke up and felt at ease. He knew that the Lord had appeared to him. The Lord was in that place, so he named the place Bethel, which means "the house of God."

God introduced Himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham and Isaac and with this He bound Jacob anew to the covenant God made with both Abraham, Isaac and again now with Jacob. The ladder Jacob saw, referred to Christ, because only through Christ's redemptive work, all believers regained access (through prayer) to their Father in heaven⁷.

Jacob erected a memorial stone with the stone he used as a pillow. He poured oil over the stone in order to identify it again later on. The stone was to remind him and his descendants of God's appearance to him at Bethel. Jacob promised God that the Lord would be his God and that he would give Him a tenth of all his possessions, if the Lord kept him and brought him back safely.

Jacob came to his uncle Laban

After a long and difficult journey, Jacob arrived at Haran. On his arrival, the herdsmen were busy bringing their livestock to the water well so that the animals could drink. He heard from them where Laban, the son of Nahor lived.

7 John 1: 51

"And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The herdsmen usually waited for each other in order to roll the heavy stone away from the opening of the pit, but when Rachel (the daughter of Laban) arrived, Jacob immediately rolled the stone away so that her father's livestock could drink.

He wept when he greeted Rachel with a kiss, and she then immediately went home and told her father about Jacob. Laban came to greet Jacob at the well and invited him to his home. Laban and his household hospitably received Jacob.

Laban's treachery

Jacob stayed with Laban for a whole month and helped with the farming. Laban did not want Jacob to work without compensation, and therefore he asked Jacob what he had to pay him. Jacob (who was in love with Rachel) did not want any payment; he wanted Rachel as his wife. Jacob told his uncle, Laban that he would work for him for seven years in order to get Rachel as his wife. Laban agreed and Jacob stayed to work for Rachel. For Jacob the seven years passed quickly, for he loved Rachel and he finally could get married to her.

Rachel had an older sister, Leah who was not as beautiful as Rachel was, but in the Bible, we read that she had tender eyes. Laban deceived Jacob at the wedding, giving him Leah as wife instead of Rachel. In the darkness, it was difficult for Jacob to realise that he was with Leah and not with Rachel. However, the next morning when Jacob realized that he had married Leah and not Rachel, he was very displeased. Laban, his uncle explained that it was against their custom, for a younger daughter to marry before the eldest, but he only had to wait a week, then he would also give him the youngest daughter as his wife. Jacob, however, had to work for Laban for another seven years before he could marry Rachel, and thus Jacob, the deceiver, was deceived. Jacob and Rachel's wedding lasted a full week and Jacob married Rachel after the week, but on condition that he had to work for her for another seven years. Therefore, through Laban's underhanded methods, Jacob married both daughters.

Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. Leah knew this, but comforted herself in knowing that she gave birth to four sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah). Rachel remained childless, so she devised a "plan" herself and just like Sarah did previously when she gave Hagar to Abraham, Rachel gave her maid, Bilhah, as wife to Jacob, Bilhah had two sons (Dan and

Naphtali) with Jacob. Rachel raised them as if they were her own children. Leah followed Rachel's example when she realised that she was no longer having children and thus gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob as wife. Zilpah also gave birth to two sons (Gad and Asher). Leah later had two more sons (Issachar and Zebulun) and a daughter (Dinah).

God also remembered Rachel and answered her prayers. She was very happy when she had a son and she named him Joseph. Rachel very much wanted another boy. Her wish came true many years later, but with the birth of Benjamin, she died.

Jacob's children

Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. With his first wife, Leah he had six sons Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun and one daughter, Dinah. With his most beloved second wife, Rachel he had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. With Leah's maid Zilpah, he had two sons, Gad and Asher and with Rachel's maid Bilhah, Jacob had two sons, Dan and Naphtali.

Laban and Jacob entered into an agreement

After 14 years in Laban's service, Joseph had eleven sons and no livestock because his labour served as payment for Laban's two daughters he had gotten as wives. Jacob considered moving back to his native land, but Laban convinced him to stay even longer by promising him livestock as payment and they entered into a new agreement. This agreement stipulated that Jacob would get all the goats and sheep with a certain colour.

The Lord blessed Jacob, and his livestock multiplied very quickly. The agreement stipulated that Jacob would get all the black sheep and spotted goats. Although at first there were very few of them, his fold soon became full. Jacob, however, did not put his trust fully in the Lord and with all sorts of clever plans, he tried to make sure that his livestock would breed the most.

Laban and his sons became jealous of Jacob, and they no longer liked him. Several times Laban changed the agreement with Jacob where he would benefit more and Jacob would be the aggrieved party. The unjust situation in which Jacob found himself with his father-in-law became too much for Jacob to bear. The Lord commanded him to return to the land of his fathers and He repeated His covenant promise. Jacob, however, was not so sure that Laban would let him go. He had no confidence in his father-in-law, for his father-in-law, Laban, often deceived him.

Jacob leaves Laban

Jacob wanted to leave Laban in secret, but he had to make sure his wives supported him in his decision. He called them to the field, where no one could eavesdrop on their conversation and they could speak in private. He told them how Laban deceived him continuously and every now and again, his wages changed. He told them that the God of his fathers had commanded him to return to his native land. They were all willing to move with Jacob, because they realized that Laban's actions had harmed them all.

Jacob left for Canaan, while Laban and his sons were shearing their flocks. Rachel quietly stole from her father's household gods (idols) to take with her and this then meant that she also served idols.

Three days later Laban learned that Jacob had moved. He immediately called the men of the family together to pursue Jacob and his company. Jacob's journey with the many children and flocks made a tardy progress. Laban and his men caught up with them after seven days at the mountains of Gilead. Jacob was very afraid because he knew that he was in the wrong. God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him not to harm Jacob.

Laban was angry with Jacob because he had departed in secret. Laban would have loved to bid them farewell with a big feast. He was also very upset about the idols that were gone from his home. Jacob knew nothing about the idols and he gave Laban permission to search through all their belongings, and if he found the gods, the culprit had to die. Rachel, the thief hid the household gods in one of the saddles of the camels and sat down on it. She did not get up when her father searched her belongings because she supposedly did not feel well. Laban was pleased; he searched everything and found nothing. Rachel deceived him, just as he deceived Jacob.

The covenant of Mizpah

Jacob was annoyed when Laban did not find the stolen goods on him or his company and their belongings. He accused his father-in-law of treating him unfairly, but Laban did not want to quarrel and suggested they make a covenant that neither of them would pass that point to harm the other. They packed up a pile of stones as evidence of their agreement and named the place Mizpah, which means "watchtower." They bid farewell to each other in peace. The Lord rescued Jacob from danger again.

Jacob returned to the Promised Land

Jacob and Laban parted ways after the conclusion of the covenant of peace, and Jacob continued on his journey to his native land. Years earlier, he had met an angel at Bethel before leaving the Promised Land. Upon his return, he met with a large number of angels. Realizing that the angels were an army in God's service, he called the place Mahanaim, meaning a "double army." The Lord wanted Jacob to realize it was His angels protecting him⁸.

Although Jacob knew that the Lord was protecting him, he was still relying on himself. He sent messengers to his master Esau to tell him that his servant Jacob was coming but Esau was already in the process of confronting him together with 400 of his men. This news caused Jacob much distress, and he made his own plans in order to survive. He divided his people and possessions into two groups, one group could flee if the other group was attacked.

He sent large flocks of livestock as gifts to Esau in an effort to win his goodwill. The guards moved separately and had to give Esau the gifts, one after the other. Jacob however, continuously felt frightened and powerless and therefore he prayed earnestly to God for guidance and protection. The two camps passed through the ford of the Jabbok River, but he remained alone on the north side of the river. He feared that Esau would attack them while they were crossing the river.

Jacob named the place Peniel

Jacob wanted to be alone because he did not feel up to meeting his brother Esau, and he felt that the fraud he committed against Esau was catching up with him. He pleaded with God to forgive his sins, since he could no longer continue on, in his own strength. A person appeared and wrestled with him. At first, Jacob resisted strongly, but he gradually realized that he was dealing with God. God gave him the strength to persist until the next morning. Jacob had to realise that his own power was useless.

Eventually, the Person struck him on the hipbone (the socket of his thigh), and this caused Jacob's hip to be dislocated. He was powerless, but he never gave up, because God gave him the strength he needed to hold onto his opponent. Jacob didn't want to let go of Him, He wanted God to bless him first, because at that point Jacob was certain that this Person he was

8 Hebrews 1: 14

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

wrestling with, was God Himself. God changed Jacob's name, which means "deceiver" to Israel, meaning "warrior of God," due to the fact that Jacob struggled with God and the people, and yet he prevailed and conquered his own weaknesses. The blessing of the Lord meant that Jacob was not afraid anymore. For the rest of his life he would walk with a limp, but that would remind him of the grace and strength he received at Peniel. Jacob named the place Peniel, because there he was face to face with God and lived to tell the tale.

Jacob meets Esau after 20 years

Jacob was at peace, because he knew that God was with him. He faced Esau without fear. They met again after twenty years and Jacob bowed down to Esau seven times when he saw him. Both of them were filled with joy and they cried, hugged and kissed each other.

Esau did not want to accept any of the gifts from Jacob, but Jacob persuaded him otherwise. Jacob turned down Esau's offer to help him move. Jacob lived in Succoth for a while, and later settled in Shechem. He was back in the land God had promised him. The Messiah would later be born from Jacob's descendants.

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3. Jacob and his descendants

Genesis 32: 18 up to Genesis 39: 6

God has always kept His chosen ones

God's mercy is infinite and boundless. He has always kept his chosen ones, even when they commit sin. In this chapter we will focus on the following main ideas:

- Sin severs the relationship between God and man and between mankind themselves.
- God provides for His chosen ones, even though they are sinners.
- God works within His children, He transform and mould them to draw near unto Him.

Jacob in Canaan

Jacob bought a piece of land in Shechem for a hundred coin pieces and settled there. He erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel, which means "The God of Israel is God." After his experience at Peniel, Jacob relied much more on God.

Jacob and Leah's youngest child was a daughter named Dinah, and all her brothers were older and living in the fields to take care of their father's livestock. She made friends with the daughters of Canaan. Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, fell in love with her. Shechem wanted to marry Dinah, but he didn't wait to have intercourse with her until they were married. Shechem forced her to have intercourse with him and thus he violated her. Even though according to the pagan laws of Canaan, this was acceptable, Dinah's brothers accused Shechem of treating her like a prostitute. Hamor the Hivite (Shechem's father) approved of what happened, and he suggested that they (Shechem and Dinah) should marry in order to become one nation. This was against the will of God.

Both Abraham⁹ and Isaac¹⁰ knew that the pious could not marry heathens and they both insisted that their children should not marry gentiles. God did not let Hamor's plan succeed. Dinah's brothers deceived Hamor and Shechem by saying that if all the Shechemites were also circumcised, they would consent to marriage. The Shechemites consented and all the men in the city were circumcised. Simeon and Levi killed all the men with their swords on the third day, while being in so much pain after circumcision, Hamor and Shechem were also killed. Jacob's other sons ransacked the city and took all livestock and feed and they lead the women and children away as slaves. Jacob was deeply disturbed by his son's actions. He feared that the inhabitants of Canaan would take vengeance, but the Lord would not allow it.

Jacob moves to Bethel

After these events, God commanded Jacob to go to Bethel. The same place where the Lord appeared to him in a dream more than 20 years earlier, while he fled from his brother Esau on his way to Laban. God reminded him of His covenant. The Lord wanted him to build Him an altar there, but first he had to bury all the idols he had found with his people under the turpentine tree at Shechem. Thereafter he went to Bethel and built the altar as the Lord requested. The Lord appeared to him again and repeated the covenant about his descendants that would become a great nation. God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob. But Israel shall be your name."

Jacob (Israel) set up a pillar of stone (a memorial stone) at the place where the Lord appeared to him to change his name, and poured a drink offering and oil on it. From there he moved southwards from Bethel to Ephrath (Bethlehem), but not far from Bethlehem, Rachel, his darling wife, died after giving birth to her second son. With her last breath, she named the baby boy Ben-oni, which means "son of my misfortune," but Jacob changed his youngest son's name to Benjamin, which means "son of my right hand."

Israel moved on and set up camp beyond the tower of Edar. Reuben, his

9 Genesis 24: 2-3

"So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear[a] by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;"

10 Genesis 28: 1

"Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan."

firstborn, had intercourse with his father's concubine Bilhah (Rachel's maid). The sin that was committed by Reuben was remembered by Israel until his deathbed, when he was blessing his sons¹¹.

Israel finally arrived in Hebron and was very happy to see his elderly father. He lived with Isaac for a long time until Isaac died at the ripe old age of 180 years. Jacob and Esau also buried Isaac in the cave of the field at Machpelah.

Judah had three sons

Jacob's sons were jealous of Joseph and one day they decided to kill him, however it was Judah's idea rather to sell Joseph as a slave and not to kill him¹². After they had sold Joseph as a slave, Judah departed from his brothers. Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, left his family circle and moved toward Adullamite, where he came out to a man named Hirah. There he married Shua, a Canaanite girl.

Judah and Shua had three sons, the oldest son was Er, the second son was Onan and the youngest son was Shelah. He married Er, his eldest son, to Tamar. Er was a wicked man who did not live according to the will of the Lord, thus the Lord put him to death. Er died childless, and so it came about that Onan (his younger brother) then had to marry Tamar. The firstborn born of such a levirate marriage would be regarded as the child of the deceased brother, so that his name would not disappear from Israel. Onan married Tamar, but he acted in such a way that she could not conceive. This was wrong in the eyes of the Lord and because Onan's sin was so great in the eyes of the Lord, He then caused Onan to die.

Shelah, Judah's third son was still too young to marry Tamar. Judah used it as an excuse to send her back to her father and she had to wait there until Shelah reached adulthood. Although in reality, Judah did not want Tamar to marry Shelah because he was afraid that Shelah would also die. Tamar waited patiently but later realized that Judah did not intend to let his youngest son marry her. In the meantime, Judah's wife died and an unhappy Tamar come up with a plan. She knew that once Judah had finished mourning his wife's death, he would go to Timnah to shear his sheep. She took off the

11 Genesis 49: 4

"Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it— He went up to my couch."

12 Genesis 37: 26-27

"So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened."

clothes she had worn as a widow and put a veil over her head, then she sat by the road, along the way where Judah would pass her by.

Tamar seduced Judah

Tamar, disguised herself as a prostitute, and waited for her widower-father-in-law at the gateway of Enaim. Judah thought she was a prostitute when he saw Tamar and he hired her services. He would send her a young goat as payment and she was smart enough to demand a pledge from him. She held Judah's signet ring with straps and his staff as a pledge.

Judah had intercourse with her, and afterward sent his friend Hirah, the Adullamite to give Tamar the young goat in exchange for his signet ring and staff. However, Hirah was unable to locate her, and in this way Tamar held on to Judah's belongings. Tamar became pregnant and the people accused her of prostitution.

When Judah found out about her pregnancy, he ordered that she should be burned. It was a harsh and unjust punishment, especially since he was also guilty. Tamar was brought outside to be burned, but she informed Judah that the man to whom this signet ring and staff belonged had made her pregnant.

This matter went completely different from what was expected. Tamar's father-in-law was the person who made her pregnant! Everyone understood why she had acted the way she did. She righted the injustice that Judah had done to her by not marrying Shelah. Judah admitted that he was in the wrong and Tamar's death sentence was never executed

Tamar gave birth to Perez and Zerah

Tamar gave birth to twins. As with the twins of Rebekah¹³, the two babies argued at birth about who should be born first. The midwife who helped Tamar first saw the hand of one baby and tied a red ribbon around his arm. However, the baby with the red ribbon withdrew his hand and the other baby was born first. The midwife welcomed him with the words: "How did you break through? This breach be upon you!" He was then called Perez. Thereafter his little brother was born with the red ribbon around his arm and they named him Zerah.

13 Genesis 25: 26

"Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them."

Christ was born of Judah's descendants. God ordained that Perez, conceived in sin, was an ancestor of David and of Christ¹⁴. Tamar, a Canaanite woman, was of pagan descent. The family tree of Christ was not one of pure descent. With the birth of Christ and Him coming to earth, He fully accepted human nature, even in His ancestors. It is important to remember that He was without sin¹⁵.

Joseph's success in Egypt

Jacob lived in Canaan, the land that God had promised to his fathers. The Lord, however did not want Jacob's sons to marry Canaanite women because then they would become a pagan nation, and therefore it would be much safer to let Jacob's descendants live in Egypt for a long time. Due to the fact that the Egyptians did not mix with other peoples, Jacob's descendants could become a great and strong nation in Egypt. This is why the Lord used Joseph, the eldest son of Rachel, as an instrument to move Jacob's descendants to Egypt.

Jacob did not hide his favour for Joseph, because Joseph was Jacob's and his darling wife's first born son. He made him a special coat with long sleeves. Joseph knew that he was his father's favourite and used it to his own advantage and he gossiped to his father about his brothers, this made that his brothers hated him.

Joseph told his brothers about two of his dreams, and this made matters worse. Those dreams amounted to his brothers and parents bowing down to him to honour him. In one dream, they were binding sheaves of wheat in the field. Their sheaves bent in front of his sheaf that was standing upright. In the other dream, the sun, moon, and stars bowed down to him. His brothers accused him of wanting to rule over them. (Jacob ruled over them years later during a famine in Egypt, when he was the viceroy of Egypt, and they bowed down to him.) When Jacob heard that Joseph shared his dreams with his brothers, he seriously admonished Joseph.

14 Matthew 1: 3 "Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram."

15 Romans 8: 3 "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh"

Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave

One day Jacob sent Joseph to see how his brothers and livestock were doing. They were at Shechem, about 80 kilometres from Hebron. On the way there Joseph learned that they had moved even further to Dothan, another 16 kilometres away. His brothers saw him coming from afar and said, "The dreamer is coming." They plotted to kill him, but Reuben convinced them to throw him into a dry well instead, that way he could starve to death. Reuben planned to save him later from the dry well and then to send Joseph home.

They immediately stripped Joseph from his coat when he arrived. Joseph pleaded with them, but his brothers did not listen to him. While they ate, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants who were on their way to Egypt with their merchandise (spices, balm, and glue). It was Judah's bright plan to sell Joseph, as a slave, to the Ishmaelites. All the brothers liked Judah's proposal, because then they would each receive a sum of money. When the Midianite merchants came to them, they pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him to the Medianites for 20 pieces of silver.

Joseph's brothers told Jacob that Joseph is dead.

The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave there. Reuben was not there at the time when his brothers sold Joseph to the merchants and he then later quietly returned to the well and was very upset when he saw that Joseph was no longer there. He tore his clothes and wept bitterly.

In the meantime, the brothers thought of a credible story. They slaughtered a goat, put Joseph's coat in the blood, and sent it to their father. They told Jacob that they had found it in the field and asked him if it might not have been Joseph's coat. Jacob immediately recognized the coat as Joseph's. There was only one conclusion, a wild beast killed Joseph and devoured him. Jacob was a heart broken man. He tore his clothes and cried out, "Torn is Joseph!" Jacob was again the victim of deceit.

It was a terrible experience for Joseph to be removed from his family and moved into a foreign country. He was innocently captured by his brothers and sold to the Ishmaelite merchants. All these events, however, took place according to God's will¹⁶. Later, during a famine, Joseph would save his family. The Lord cared for Joseph even though he was experiencing difficult circumstances.

16 Psalm 105: 17

"He sent a man before them— Joseph—who was sold as a slave."

Joseph worked as a slave for Potiphar

An Egyptian named Potiphar bought Joseph. He was the king of Egypt's official. Joseph was a devoted worker and the Lord blessed him. Potiphar soon realized that Joseph was very capable and appointed him as his foreman over his household. Instead of carrying out orders like a slave, Joseph now gave the orders himself. Joseph was doing well, the Lord had blessed his work, and Potiphar trusted him completely.

Potiphar's wife, however, repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph into having relations with her. Joseph did not want to sin against God or disappoint Potiphar and thus when Joseph refused to comply with her she grabbed him by his clothes. Joseph fled from her, but she took hold of Joseph's robe so that it stayed behind with her. She was livid and accused Joseph of trying to attack her. She showed his robe as evidence for Potiphar which meant that he could not help but believe her and he had Joseph imprisoned.

Things were not looking up for Joseph. He was humiliated by his brothers, thrown into a dry well, sold as a slave, and then innocently imprisoned. However, God was with Joseph and he received an important post in prison.

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4. Joseph, the Viceroy of Egypt

Genesis 39: 7 up to Genesis 43: 34

Joseph, humbled at first and then exalted

God carried out His decree! He used Joseph in order for His will to be carried out. He first humbled Joseph when he became a slave and then raised him to the viceroy of Egypt. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God gives wisdom to His chosen ones.
- Centuries later Jesus Christ would like Joseph, first be humbled and then exalted.
- God leads His chosen ones to repentance.

Joseph in prison

Two of the king's high officials were at one point imprisoned with Joseph. One was the foreman of the cupbearers and the other the foreman of the bakers. They were two court officials and that meant they served the king personally. They committed an offense, and it was Joseph's responsibility to minister to them in prison.

One morning when Joseph came to them, he saw that they were troubled. They each had a disturbing dream the previous night. They were sure that the dreams meant something, but there was no one that could interpret the dreams to them. Joseph knew that sometimes the Lord reveals something about the future to people through dreams, because he could attest to that from his own experience. Joseph explained to them that only God could declare dreams and asked them to share their dreams.

God revealed the meaning of the dreams

The cupbearer saw in his dream a vine with three tendrils and the clusters on the tendrils soon ripened. He had the king's drinking cup with him; he squeezed the grapes into it and gave the cup to Pharaoh (the king) to drink. Joseph understood this dream immediately. The three tendrils meant three days. In three days time the cupbearer would be reappointed in his post. The cupbearer was very pleased about this. Joseph then asked the cupbearer a favour; he had to tell the Pharaoh about Joseph's innocence.

The baker then was very eager to tell his dream as well, for his dream was much like that of the cupbearer. He carried three baskets with white bread on his head and in the top basket were all kinds of food for the king to eat. Birds came and pecked the food from the top basket. Joseph had bad news for him because in three days, the baker would be hanged and the birds would come and peck away at his flesh. It was the king's birthday three days later and everything happened just as Joseph said. The cupbearer forgot about Joseph and thus Joseph stayed in prison for two more years before the Lord disposed to set him free.

Pharaoh's dreams

One night, about two years later, Pharaoh had two short dreams, one after the other. In his first dream, he was standing next to the river Nile, he saw seven sleek, fat cows emerging from the Nile, and they went to feed in the meadow. Thereafter seven ugly and gaunt looking cows came out of the river (the Nile); they ate the seven fat cows but remained just as ugly and gaunt looking. Pharaoh woke up startled, but he immediately fell asleep again. In his second dream, he dreamed of seven fat wheatears (heads of grain). Then came seven lean wheatears, scorched by the east wind, and they devoured the fat wheatears. Pharaoh woke up startled. He was very unsettled, because he had a suspicion that his dreams meant something.

He called all his magicians and wise men, but they could not explain the dreams. The cupbearer suddenly remembered about Joseph in prison. He told the Pharaoh about Joseph and that he had laid out his and the baker's dreams. Pharaoh immediately sent for Joseph. They first had to shave and tidy Joseph up, before he could appear before the Pharaoh. Joseph explained it was God doing the interpretation of the dreams, not him.

Pharaoh told Joseph about his dreams and Joseph explained to Pharaoh that God made the interpretation of the dreams known to Joseph and that both dreams had the same meaning. God would certainly carry out his decision, so the king dreamed about it twice. The Lord decided that there would be an abundance of food in Egypt for seven years, but then seven years of famine would follow. Joseph also gave Pharaoh good advice. Pharaoh had to appoint a sensible man to ensure that during the years of prosperity, enough food was stored for the years that would not yield any harvests.

Pharaoh appointed Joseph as

Pharaoh and his servants immediately accepted Joseph's excellent proposal. Where could they find a better man to carry out the plan than Joseph himself? Clearly, the Spirit of God was at work in him. Pharaoh immediately appointed Joseph as the viceroy over all of Egypt. He also received the king's signet ring. He issued laws with that ring. They put a robe of fine linen on him and hung a gold chain around his neck. Pharaoh let him drive through the city on his second carriage, and there was a person who walked in front of the carriage to warn people to give way and Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-Paaneah. Joseph also got a wife, Asenat, from Pharaoh; she was the daughter of a priest. From that marriage two sons were born, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Hundreds of years later when the Israelites moved out of Egypt, the descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim were also part of the Exodus (or the deliverance of Israel) on their way to the Promised Land¹⁷.

It was part of God's decree that Joseph should become the viceroy of the powerful Egypt; he was only thirty years old at that time. He had been sold as a slave in Canaan thirteen years earlier. He suffered greatly and was humiliated several times, but God made that it was all to the good. He was exalted after his humiliation. Christ was also exalted and glorified by God centuries later after his suffering and humiliation. Joseph's life was indicative to Jesus Christ.

Joseph continued to trust God in the midst of all that happened with and to him. In Egypt, he was the only one who knew God and believed in Him. He was so important that he could easily become haughty, but he remained humble and modest. With the birth of his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, he gave them Israelite names, indicating that he had not forgotten God.

Seven years of prosperity and then the terrible drought

During the seven years of prosperity, Joseph gathered large supplies of wheat from all the cities. He stored so much wheat that they later no longer knew how many there were. Pharaoh sent the people who had come to seek help to Joseph, when the seven years of famine started. Joseph sold the grain to the hungry people and brought the money he received to the palace of the Pharaoh. The money of the people was running out, thus he

17 Numbers 26: 28

"The sons of Joseph according to their families, by Manasseh and Ephraim, were:"

exchanged the wheat for their livestock and when their livestock was up, he exchanged the wheat for their land and in this way, the whole of Egypt later belonged to Pharaoh.

All the people looked to Joseph for help; even the nations that lived outside Egypt. People came from afar to buy grain from Joseph and thus Joseph became a world famous man. The famine was also severe in Canaan. They did not take precautions as they did in Egypt. Jacob, Joseph's father, sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain from the Egyptians. He only kept Benjamin (his youngest son) with him because Jacob was afraid that something might happen to him and he was still young.

Benjamin was very special to him because it was the only child of Rachel (his darling wife), he still had. He did not know that Joseph was in Egypt and still alive

Joseph's brothers in Egypt

The ten sons of Jacob went straight to Joseph in Egypt, because he was the only man who could help them. About 20 years earlier, they sold him as a slave. Joseph was a grown man and therefore they did not recognise him and they also did not expect to find him there. According to them, he was probably still a slave somewhere or he might even be dead already. Joseph on the other hand recognised them immediately but he did not tell them who he was. He spoke Egyptian and used an interpreter to communicate with them. (The Egyptian language or Ancient Egyptian is an extinct Afro-Asiatic language that was spoken in ancient Egypt) They stood before him so reverently, and this made Joseph thought back to the dreams he had as a teenager. He didn't want revenge, but he would thoroughly put them to the test to find out whether or not their attitude had changed in the meantime. Joseph pretended not to believe them and accused them of being spies, who came to spy on Egypt to attack the country later.

Joseph's brothers then told the viceroy their family's history in order to convince him of their honesty. They were twelve brothers, but the youngest stayed behind with their father and the other brother was no longer there. They still stuck with the story they told their father. Joseph persisted in accusing them of espionage, and this was a serious charge.

He tested them and insisted that they fetch their youngest brother for him. The others would remain in jail. He then locked up all ten of them for three

days to show that he was serious, but on the third day, Joseph came up with a new proposal. He thought of their hungry households and allowed them to go, but one of them had to stay in jail until they brought their youngest brother. This way he obliged them to return to Egypt.

Joseph's brothers thought back to the day they lowered Joseph into the pit and when they would not listen to his pleas. They talked among themselves and Reuben reproached them for not listening to him that day. Meanwhile, Joseph listened intently to their conversation, and no one realized that he understood them. They were so upset that they also did not notice that how Joseph cried and even left them for a while as a result thereof. Joseph realized that Reuben wanted to help him and decided not to punish him further. Simeon was the second oldest and he should have protected Joseph when Reuben was not around; thus Joseph subsequently decided to leave Simeon in Egypt and arrested him before their eyes.

Joseph did not want to avenge himself on them. He just wanted to determine if they were still the same harsh and careless people from before. Joseph realized how difficult it would be for his brothers to persuade their father to send Benjamin with them and yet he makes the demand to determine whether his brothers were still as unloving as they used to be towards him. The hunger would force them to return, but to be sure, Joseph kept Simeon as a prisoner.

Jacob's sons returned to Canaan

Jacob's sons were thankful for the wheat they could buy, but dismayed about leaving Simeon in prison. During their return, one of them, wanted to feed his donkey and discovered in his pocket his bundle of money that they had paid for the wheat. He told the others about it and they became very scared. They began to see that God was punishing them for all their sins.

Back in Canaan, they told Jacob everything, because when they returned to Egypt, they had to take Benjamin with them, otherwise Simeon would not be released. Jacob did not want to know anything about this. Reuben coaxed Jacob and told him that he would stand in for Benjamin's safety. He was willing to give his two sons to Jacob as a pledge to Benjamin, but Jacob would not budge.

The wheat soon ran out while the famine continued. The brothers were compelled to go to Egypt again, but they could not go without Benjamin.

It took a lot of begging to convince their father to let Benjamin go along. He blamed them, because they told the Egyptian they had another brother. They explained that the man had asked them so much about their entire family that they could not help but speak the truth. Judah himself acted as guarantor of Benjamin. Reuben's offer that Jacob could kill his two sons was well intentioned, but of no value and Jacob did not respond to this. However, the sponsorship of Judah was significant, because from his tribe came the Guarantor of all the believers, Jesus Christ¹⁸.

Famine forced the brothers back to Egypt

Jacob had to send Benjamin with his other sons to Egypt; he had no choice because of the famine. They took with them a bunch of gifts for the viceroy of Egypt and double the money needed so that they could pay for the previous wheat as well. Jacob prayed to God for the safe return of Simeon and Benjamin together with the rest of his sons.

In Egypt, the brothers went straight to Joseph. He saw that they brought Benjamin with them and he then instructed his caretaker to prepare a large meal at his home, for the men were to come and eat with him. Joseph's brothers were pleasantly surprised, although a little unsettled. Was it not just a clever plan by the viceroy to overpower them unawares because they still had last time's money with them? Before entering the house, they first wanted to give the money to the caretaker, but he did not want to take it. It left them astounded. They were very kindly received, and when Joseph arrived at the house, they offered him the gifts, all bowing to him. He asked them how their father was doing and when he saw Benjamin, he was moved. He first went to his room to cry, he washed his face, and then came back again.

They were surprised when they had to take their places at the dinner table. Joseph arranged it in such a way that they sat according to their ages (from the oldest to the youngest). While in the meantime, Simeon also joined them. How would the viceroy know their ages? It was a formal meal with food of the best quality and the brothers all sat together. The Egyptians were sitting aside because they did not eat with the Hebrews. They had a good meal and everyone was cheerful and happy. Yet there was one thing that troubled them, why was Benjamin's portion five times bigger than theirs was?

18 Hebrews 7: 14

"For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."

Joseph's brothers' return to Canaan

The unforgettable meal in the viceroy's house was over and the brothers were very happy. They had a royal reception and they were all back together. This time, the viceroy did not demand that anyone be left behind and he paid for all the grain! Their father would be relieved and very pleased to see them all. They took to the road early the next morning. They wanted to move as far as they could, while it was still cool

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5. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers

Genesis 44: 1 up to Genesis 50: 26

God work through generations

Through faith, Jacob saw what the future held. His sons were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God knows the iniquity of man.
- God protected His people in the midst of difficult circumstances.
- God grew His chosen ones into a great nation.

The Governor's Silver Cup

The brothers were not far from Egypt when they realized they were being followed by the viceroy's caretaker. They were stunned to learn that they had stolen the viceroy's silver cup. He accused them of retaliating good with evil. They were confused; after all, the caretaker himself knew that they had brought back the money they had found in their pockets last time. The caretaker could search them. If he got the cup from one of them, that one had to die and they would all be the viceroy's slaves.

The caretaker was unfazed by that. If they did not want to admit that they had taken the cup, he would search them. They immediately took their bags off the donkeys and opened them. The caretaker started with the eldest and searched all their bags down the line, from old to young. The further he went, the more joyful they became. He would not get anything. Finally, he was with Benjamin, the youngest's bag. He felt in his bag and there among the wheat he took out the viceroy's silver cup. He knew the cup was there because he put it there himself at Joseph's command. Benjamin and his brothers were unaware of what he did. The fact that the cup was found in Benjamin's pocket meant that Benjamin had to die and the rest of them had to become slaves. They tore their clothes because of grief and dismay. Each one loaded his donkey again and went back to Egypt with the caretaker.

The brothers pleads with the viceroy

The brothers fell to the ground in front of the viceroy and he wanted to know from them how they could do such a thing? After all, they should have known he would figure it out. Judah replied that God had found out about their iniquity. He thought about the injustice they had done to Joseph. He did not realize at that moment that Joseph was standing right in front of him. Joseph felt in his heart that they were finally acknowledging their sin and realizing that God was punishing them for it!

Judah proposed that they all become Joseph's slaves, including Benjamin. Joseph would not accept his proposal because he was a righteous man. They could safely leave, only Benjamin had to stay behind and work as a slave, because he was the culprit. Judah began to plead with Benjamin. The viceroy had to understand that their elderly father was very much attached to Benjamin, for he was the only son who was still alive from the two sons his father had with his darling wife. Their old father would surely die if they did not take Benjamin back with them. He would rather stay instead of Benjamin. Judah acted as guarantor for Benjamin. Jesus Christ, from the seed of Judah, would many centuries later intercede as Guarantor for every chosen man on earth¹⁹. Judah's action was indicative to Christ.

The governor introduced himself

Joseph could not remain silent any longer. He thoroughly tested his brothers and saw that their hearts had changed. They did not abandon Benjamin as they did with Joseph when they had sold him as a slave at the time, without having a twinge of regret. They also loved their father much more. He sent out all his Egyptian courtiers, because he wanted to be alone with them. When everyone left, he said to them in their own language, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" He burst into tears and cried out loud. The brothers were stunned. They could not believe their ears. The men spoke in their own language. He explained to them that he was their brother Joseph, whom they sold as a slave long ago. He reassured them: "Look," he said, "to preserve lives, God sent me before you."

Two years of famine had passed, but there were still five more years of famine ahead. God disposed of it in such a way that he had to come to Egypt to take care of them; otherwise, they all would have starved to death. They

19 Hebrews 7: 22

"By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant."

had to go home immediately so that they could fetch their father and families. Then they could go and live in the land of Goshen. They hugged and kissed each other while everyone cried.

In the meantime, Pharaoh heard what had happened and he helped Joseph in bringing his family to Egypt. His brothers had to fetch their father and their households and he would give them the best part of Egypt to live in. They were also given Egyptian chariots in which to transport their father, wives, and children back to Egypt. They should not worry if they could not transport all their furniture as well because he would give them the best in Egypt. Joseph also gave each of them a new set of clothes. Benjamin was given five sets of clothes and another three hundred shekels of silver. He sent his father a bunch of produce from Egypt, even provisions for them for the journey to Egypt.

Before leaving, Joseph warned his brothers not to reproach each other or fight on the way home. He was afraid they would accuse each other and fight about who were actually acting the most wrong towards him. The Lord caused good to come forth out of what was done wrong.

Jacob went to Egypt

The eleven brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob that Joseph was still alive. This news was almost too good to be true for Jacob and his heart almost stopped. How could it even be possible? He believed all these years that it was a wild animal, which had torn Joseph to pieces. No, it just could not be! However, when he heard his sons telling him, things Joseph had said and he saw the chariots, his spirit was filled with life. His son Joseph was still alive and he would see him before he (Jacob) died.

In Hebron, the place where Jacob lived, Jacob was packing up all his belongings and loading them onto the wagons. Sixty-six of Jacob's descendants, children and grandchildren, were in the trek. It did not include the wives of Jacob's eleven sons. They arrived at Beersheba after a few days. Isaac, Jacob's father, lived there and built an altar for the Lord²⁰. Jacob, like his father, sacrificed to the Lord there, probably on the same altar that was still built by his father.

Jacob must have wrestled in his mind with the question: the Lord had

20 Genesis 26: 25

“So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.”

promised the land of Canaan to him and his descendants, and at that time, they were moving out of Canaan. Is he not perhaps mistaken? God appeared to him in a vision that night and reassured him. He should not be afraid to go to Egypt. The Lord would be with him and make him a great nation there.

Jacob and his family's arrival in Egypt

Jacob sent Judah ahead to Joseph in order to find out where the place, they were to live, is. Joseph immediately harnessed his chariot and rode to meet his father. Their encounter was heart-warming. Father and son hugged each other and they wept with joy. Jacob cried out, "Now I may die after seeing your face, that you are still alive!"

Pharaoh had not yet given his permission for them to live in Goshen; he only promised them that they could get a place in the best part of Egypt, but the exact location he did not establish. Joseph took five of his brothers with him to talk to Pharaoh. They had to emphasize that they were cattle farmers, because then they would be able to live in Goshen (later the city of Rameses as mentioned in Genesis 47:11 also called Raamses in Exodus 1). That region was isolated, and the Egyptians had no contact with the shepherds. The Egyptians loathed cattle ranchers because they considered livestock sacred and did not like livestock to be slaughtered. Pharaoh then agreed to let them live in Goshen because they were cattle farmers.

In that isolated region in Egypt, the Lord made sure that the Israelites could grow into a great nation, without the danger of mixing with the pagan nations. Pharaoh also received Jacob and when asked, Jacob informed him that he was 130 years old. He endured many hardships in his life, and was not sure if he would be able to grow as old as his ancestors did. Upon his departure, Jacob greeted Pharaoh with a benediction.

The measures Joseph took during the famine

Joseph continued with his work as viceroy. The famine became even worse. The Egyptians at first bought the grain from Joseph with money, when they did not have any money left, they started paying with livestock, and when they did not have any livestock left to sell, they started paying with their land. Finally, they did not have anything left but to sell themselves and then they sold themselves into slavery. They thus became slaves for the Pharaoh because of the terrible famine.

Only the Egyptian priests did not become slaves and retained their land. The famine made the Pharaoh of Egypt a powerful and an immensely rich king. All the land belonged to him and all the inhabitants were his slaves. He got all this thanks to Joseph. Joseph also introduced a new form of taxation. He gave seeds to the people, and they could sow in the fields, but since it was no longer their land, they had to pay a fifth of the harvest to Pharaoh

Jacob blessed his sons

Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years. On his deathbed, he called Joseph. Joseph promised under oath that he would bury Jacob with his ancestor's in the cave of the field at Machpelah in Canaan.

Joseph brought his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him, Jacob adopted them as his own sons, and he blessed them by laying his hands on them. Joseph saw that Jacob was crossing his hands, so his right hand rested on Ephraim. Because Jacob's eyes were already very weak, Joseph thought that his father had made a mistake and he wanted to correct him, because Manasseh was the eldest son and his grandfather's right hand must have actually rested on him. However, Jacob was precisely aware that he had crossed his hands because Ephraim's descendants would be more than the descendants of Manasseh. They would become two separate Israelite tribes, a double blessing to their father, Joseph, through whom God saved the then known world from famine.

In this way, the Spirit of God led Jacob to see into the distant future. He prophesied to each of his sons what would happen to them in the future as well as what would happen to the people of Israel.

Jacob started with his eldest son, Reuben, and he did not pronounce the benediction of the birthright on Reuben, for Reuben had intercourse with his concubine, Bilha²¹. His descendants would have little influence and live in isolation at the south of the East Jordan country.

With Jacob's comment that Simeon and Levi were brothers, he was not referring to their biological bond, but that they were bound together because of the murdered people of Shechem, whom they massacred after Shechem's men had themselves circumcised. Jacob said that their weapons were tools

21 Genesis 35: 22

“And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it.”

of violence. Even though Simeon and Levi acted in the interest of their sister Dinah, it was anything but honourable. On his deathbed, Jacob in no uncertain terms, condemned the killing of the Shechemites, which resulted in Simeon and Levi not receiving a blessing, but a curse. “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel” (Genesis 47: 7). These two, who are so wrongly bound together, would be driven apart and dispersed among the tribes of Israel. Simeon would never play an important role in history. Nothing would ever be in Simeon’s name. Eventually, Simeon’s tribe was derived by the tribe of Judah²².

Levi, too, was scattered among Israel and received no inheritance. However, after the people’s sinful actions with the golden calf in the wilderness, they were given a place of honour²³, for they were isolated from then on to be ordained in the service of the tabernacle²⁴. It was only by the grace of God that the Levites were included like this again, after everything Levi did. Levi was not given an inheritance because God was his inheritance. Levi’s descendants were to be included again after everything. Levi was not given an inheritance because God was his inheritance. The Lord spoke in Malachi about this binding, where one is bound in God, and honoured in being a priest to God²⁵.

Judah’s blessing was distinctive. Jacob saw in his future that Judah would become powerful and conquer his enemies like a young lion. He would rule over his brothers and his rule would last until Shiloh came. The people would obey Shiloh. Shiloh referred to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jacob foretold that the Messiah would be born of the seed of Judah. All the families of the earth would be blessed in Abraham, for the Messiah would be the Saviour for all believers from all nations across the earth²⁶.

22 1 Chronicles 4: 27 “Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did any of their families multiply as much as the children of Judah.”

23 Exodus 32: 26 Then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.”

24 Joshua 13: 14 “Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said to them.”

25 Malachi 2:5 “My covenant was with him [Levi], one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name.”

26 Genesis 12:3 “I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall” be blessed”

Jacob compared some of his sons to animals. Issachar, Leah's fifth son, was compared to a strong-boned donkey, the one who had to help do the work of the others. The tribe of Issachar lived in the plain of Jezreel, through which the trade route ran from Babylonia to Egypt. They would be of service to the other tribes by transporting goods. Being compared to a donkey is not flattering today, but back then, a donkey was an honourable, loyal animal that was always ready to carry out commands.

Jacob compared Dan, the slave girl Bilhah's son, to a serpent. Jacob's prediction that Dan would give his people justice was correct, for the strongest judge of all came from the tribe of Dan, namely Samson. His deeds were legendary in Israel. Nevertheless, Jacob continued to say that, "a horned serpent on the road, biting the horse on the heels, so that its rider falls backward." The tribe of Dan later reintroduced idolatry back into Israel.

Jacob compared Naphtali, the maid Bilhah's second son, to an antelope, a timid, quick and graceful beast of the field. As a young man, he was evidently an untamed, graceful, and wild young man. Many years later, during the time of Deborah during the war against Sisera, the brave fighters of Naphtali, fought aggressively and with the speed of lightning, leading the Israelites to plenty of victories (Judges 4). The second part of Naphtali's prophetic blessing said that he had spoken beautiful words. Thus, he was a speaker of stature, a man who could do his word justice.

Benjamin was the son born to Jacob when he was very old, but on that day Rachel, his beloved wife, also died. He compared Benjamin to a wolf. "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil" (Genesis 49:27). He is compared to a ruthless predator tearing up its prey. Benjamin would become the fighting tribe of Israel. King Saul, was a Benjaminite and a brave soldier (1 Samuel 14:47).

Jacob compared Joseph to a young fruit tree. Joseph was Jacob's darling son and with the help of God, he would keep to his feet

Zebulun, Leah's youngest son, is said only to have lived by the sea and would become a tribe of merchants and navigators. When Jacob said that their eyes were fixed on Sidon in Phoenicia, he meant that Zebulun would trade with Phoenicia.

Asher, the son of Silpa, would eat food fit for a king and live near the sea. In the New Testament, Anna, an 84-year-old prophetess, was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher and someone who served the Lord day and night in the temple. She offered “food fit for a king” to Israel’s newborn King, Jesus Christ, when He was brought to the temple (Luke 2: 36-38).

Jacob foretold that Gad, Zilpah’s other son, would wage war and conquer. However, Gad also had special people in his offspring. Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, who challenged Ahab, Jezebel, and their false prophets and asked the Lord to send a drought of three and a half years to the land, was one of them. Jephthah, who later acted as judge, was also from the tribe of Gad²⁷.

Jacob’s death and burial at Machpelah

After Jacob concluded the blessings of his sons, they had to promise him again that they would bury him in the cave of the field at Machpelah in Canaan, where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were buried. Jacob subsequently died at the age of 147 years old. Joseph instructed the Egyptian physicians to embalm Jacob’s body, which lasted 40 days. The whole of Egypt mourned with the Israelites for Jacob for 70 days.

In this, we see the high esteem in which the Egyptians held Jacob. They would normally mourn for a king just two days longer.

After the mourning period was completed, Pharaoh gave Joseph leave to bury his father with his brothers. Large numbers of people, consisting of relatives and Egyptians, went to Canaan and buried Jacob with his father’s in the cave of the field at Machpelah. After Jacob’s funeral, Joseph’s brothers were afraid that he would avenge him on them. They sent him a message that Jacob had asked him to forgive them before he died. Joseph wept when he got the message, because he saw everything as the decree of God. By his coming to Egypt, his people were not only saved but also able to grow into a great nation.

Death of Joseph

Joseph firmly believed in the promise of God that Israel would still live in the land of Canaan. He therefore made his brothers promise that when

27 Judges 11: 11

“Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the Lord in Mizpah.”

they returned to Canaan, they would take his bones with them and reburial them there. He never became an Egyptian and wanted to be buried in the Promised Land. Joseph died when he was 110 years old and because of the position he held in Egypt as the viceroy, he was embalmed and tentatively buried in Egypt.

After Joseph's death, the children of Israel felt lost. Joseph realized this before he died and therefore tried to comfort them by saying that God would certainly not forget them and bring them out of Egypt into the land he had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As a sign of his faith, he made them promise that they would take his bones from Egypt to Canaan when they moved back there and with the exodus from Egypt, they honoured Joseph's request²⁸.

Recommended reading

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28 Exodus 13:19

“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, “God will surely [a]visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.”

6. God calls Moses

Exodus 1 up to Exodus 5

God protected His people

God saw Israel's distress and tribulation in Egypt. He called Moses as leader of Israel with the command to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the promised land. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God saw the misery and oppression of his people.
- God saved Moses when he was a baby and in the palace of the Pharaoh, God prepared him for his calling.
- God is "I am what I am." The faithful God, who keeps His promises.

The terrible oppression of God's people in Egypt

The Lord blessed the descendants of Jacob in Egypt because they had to become a great nation. The Egyptians kept them aside, and this was the great reason why God made them stay in Goshen, so that they would not mingle with pagan women and deny their own religion. At first everything went well especially when Joseph was still alive, but as time passed other Pharaohs came to power. One of those later Pharaohs (who knew nothing about Joseph) wanted to limit the numbers of the children of Israel (also called the Hebrews); because he feared they would become more in numbers and then be more powerful than the Egyptians are. He did this by oppressing the Israelites for they had to work very hard. They had to make bricks and built two storage cities, Pithom and Raamses, for him. The new Pharaoh thought that many of the Israelites would die because of the terrible and hard manual labour they had to do. Yet this did not happen, and the Israelites just became increasingly more.

The pharaoh then devised an evil plan where the Israelites numbers would decrease. He instructed two Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill all the Israelite boys at birth. However, the midwives feared God more than they feared Pharaoh and they did not want to and neither could they kill those innocent babies. They reported to the Pharaoh that they could not carry out his command because by the time they arrived with the women to help, the babies had already been born. When Pharaoh realized that his plan failed, he gave his soldiers the devastating order to throw all the Israelite boys into

the Nile at birth so that they could drown.

Pharaoh acted as henchman for the devil. A nation was emerging from the patriarchs, so the devil directed his attack on this nation. Satan wanted to prevent God's promise to Abraham from being fulfilled by destroying this new nation, Israel²⁹. God made sure the devil did not succeed. He called Moses to lead His people out from Egypt so they could be in a covenant commitment with Him. Centuries later, through Herod, Satan would try to prevent Christ's redemptive work again by killing all the boys two years old and younger³⁰.

The birth of Moses

Amram and his wife, Jochebed were both descendants of Levi. During the time that Pharaoh gave this devastating order, Jochebed gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. This boy was not their first child, but their youngest for he had a brother, Aaron of about three years old and an older sister, Miriam.

Amram and Jochebed could not bear the thought that their baby should be thrown into the Nile by Pharaoh's soldiers and thus they hid him for three months. However, he became too big to hide and thus Jochebed had to think of a plan. She braided him a wicker basket and covered it with asphalt and pitch to make it waterproof, she then laid her baby therein and placed the basket in the reeds. The reeds had to stop the basket from floating away. Her daughter, Miriam, was hiding nearby to see what would happen to her baby brother.

God saved Moses! Pharaoh's daughter went to bath in the Nile when she saw the basket and sent her maid to fetch the basket. Inside the basket was a crying, beautiful baby boy. Pharaoh's daughter immediately realised what happened. "This is one of the Hebrew's children," she said. Miriam, the baby's sister awaited her chance and then asked the princess if she should get the boy a foster mother. Pharaoh's daughter agreed, and Miriam went to call Jochebed, so that the princess could converse with her. The princess

29 Genesis 28:14

"Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

30 Matthew 2: 16

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men."

asked Jochebed to take care of the baby on her behalf until he was older and weaned from his mother. She would then compensate Jochebed for it.

When the little boy of Amram and Jochebed was three years old, Jochebed took him to Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her own child and she called him Moses, because she said "I drew him out of the water" and thus Moses means to draw or pull, to "trek."

Moses grew up in the palace of the Pharaoh. He was raised as an Egyptian prince and taught by Egyptian teachers. By the grace of God, the Egyptians equipped him for his future task³¹. He had already learned from his parents to serve the one true God. The Lord kept and protected him all his life.

Moses escapes to Midian

One day a forty-year-old Moses went to see how hard the Israelites had to work and he saw how an Egyptian mistreated an Israelite. Moses became very angry and he then beat the Egyptian to death and buried him in the sand. He was under the impression that no one saw what he did.

The following day Moses again went to see the terrible conditions and the suffering the Israelites were in. However, this time he saw two Hebrew men fighting with each other. He determined who the culprit was and asked him, "Why are you beating your neighbour?" The man thought that Moses was acting superior by appointing himself as judge and leader over them. Moses already possessed the necessary qualities to provide guidance, but he had not yet received the competence from God to be able to do so. He wanted to deliver his people, but at that stage, they did not understand it³². The time that God has set for Israel's deliverance has not yet come.

The Israelite's question to Moses was a valid one: "Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us?" Furthermore, the man said, "Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" This startled Moses. Everyone knew that he killed an Egyptian! Pharaoh also heard what had happened and wanted to kill Moses, but Moses had already fled to Midian.

31 Acts 7: 22

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."

32 Acts 7: 25

"For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand."

Moses lives in Midian

Moses fled for his life, and when he arrived in Midian, he sat down at a well to rest. He saw seven girls who wanted to give water to their livestock. Rude shepherds arrived and chased the girls away, but then Moses drove them away and helped the girls to give water to their animals.

At their home, the sisters told their father, Jethro (also called Reuel), what had happened at the well. Jethro commanded his daughters to invite Moses to dinner. Moses learned that Jethro was a priest, and he decided to live with them for a while. Just like Moses Jethro was also a descendant of Abraham. Midian was the progenitor of the Midianite, the people to which Jethro belonged. Midian was the third son of Abraham by his second wife, Keturah³³.

Moses decided to work at Jethro and later married his eldest daughter Zipporah. His eldest son he named Gershom, meaning “a stranger there.” Moses lived for forty years in Midian. The Pharaoh who wanted to kill Moses, died in the mean time, but the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt continued. The circumstances they found themselves in were rough and troublesome and they constantly complained about it. God heard their pleas and saw their hardship and thought of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He did not forget about them and He found that the time for their deliverance has arrived.

God send Moses to deliver Israel

Moses was tending to his father-in-law's sheep at Mount Horeb when he witnessed an extraordinary phenomenon. He saw a burning bush but the bush was not consumed by the flames³⁴. Moses stepped closer to investigate, but then a voice from the burning bush warned him to take off his shoes, for he was standing on holy ground. It was the voice of God! God introduced Himself to Moses as, “The God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” God drew a connecting line from the past to the present through his introduction.

Startled Moses covered his face in fear. The Lord told Moses he heard the

33 Genesis 25: 1-2

“Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah”

34 Exodus 3: 1

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”

cries of his oppressed people in Egypt. God then commanded Moses to return to Egypt in order to lead his people to the land of Canaan. Moses was full of excuses. He felt too insignificant to go to the Pharaoh and to lead the Israelites away from Egypt. God reassured him that he should not be afraid of the new king because God was with him. He gave Moses the assurance that the Israelites would still serve the Lord on that mountain, Horeb.

Moses had further objections to his assignment

Moses was still troubled. The Israelites would certainly ask him who sent him, and he did not know whether the “the Lord, the God of the fathers” would satisfy them as an answer. The people had fallen into idolatry in Egypt³⁵, and perhaps they no longer knew the God of their fathers. Moses wanted to know how to answer them if they asked him, who had sent him? He did not know God’s name. God told Moses, “I am what I am.” Centuries later, in his, “I am -” statements, Jesus joined the name of God.

God instructed Moses to introduce Him to the Israelites as “the Lord, the God of your fathers.” However, Moses had objections again. What happens if the Israelites do not believe him? Moses received three signs to convince them. “Throw your staff to the ground,” said the Lord. His staff turned into a snake. Moses was startled and wanted to flee, but at God’s command, he grabbed the serpent by the tail and it turned back into a staff. After that, he had to tuck his hand into his chest, to his bosom. When he pulled it out, his hand was leprous-looking, like snow. (Leprosy is an infectious disease that damages the skin and the nervous system and in this post-modern era we live in, there is a chance that the disease can be cured with early diagnosis and treatment.) Then God ordered him to put his hand back into his chest and when he pulled it out, his hand was healed. Should they still not believe Moses after those two signs, Moses had to scoop water out of the Nile and pour it on the ground. The water would turn into blood.

Moses had a new objection. He struggled to speak from an early age. The Lord pointed out to him that He is the One who gives people the ability to speak. Moses still wanted to resist, but the Lord became angry with him because he was so unwilling and the Lord told Moses that he had to take his brother Aaron with him to speak on his behalf. God promised Moses that He would be with them and show them what to do.

35 Ezekiel 20: 7

“Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’”

The two of them, Moses and Aaron, had to go together with the elders of the people of Israel, to Pharaoh to inform him that the Israelites wanted to go and sacrifice to the Lord in the desert. They had to ask Pharaoh for permission. It was a fair request, but the Lord knew that Pharaoh would refuse the request. Then the Lord would plague Egypt with the ten plagues and thereafter the Pharaoh would allow them to move. Thus, what Moses wanted to accomplish on his own 40 years prior, God would do now. Not Moses, but God would deliver Israel.

Moses returned to Egypt

Moses discussed the events with his father-in-law, Jethro, and then returned to Egypt with his wife and two sons (they had a second son, Eliezer, in the meantime). Moses fell very seriously ill during his trip to Egypt. This happened because he had not yet circumcised Eliezer at that time. Zipporah took a sharp stone and circumcised Eliezer with it. She saved Moses' life when she circumcised Eliezer, since God can only be served within the covenant³⁶.

Probably, after these events, Moses decided to send his wife and sons back to his father-in-law, because Moses travelled on his own. The Lord assured him in Midian that all those in Egypt who wanted to kill him were already deceased. Moses knew, however, that Pharaoh would not listen to him, for the Lord had prepared him for the fact that the Pharaoh had hardened his heart and he would refuse to let the people move away.

God gave Aaron the command to go and meet Moses. The two brothers met in the desert at Mount Horeb and they were very happy to see each other again after 40 years. Moses told Aaron about the instruction he had received and together they left for Egypt.

The first meeting with Pharaoh

Upon arrival in Egypt, Moses and Aaron, called together all the elders of Israel and told them about the instruction God gave Moses. Moses showed them the signs that the Lord had shown him at Horeb and everyone believed and accepted that God had sent him to deliver them out of Egypt.

The next step was to tell the Pharaoh that God wanted Israel to have a feast for Himself in the desert. Just as Moses expected Pharaoh most definitely

36 Genesis 17: 14

“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

refused. He did not know the Lord. Moses and Aaron nicely asked him and explained to him that the Israelites want to travel into the desert for a three-day trip to bring sacrifices unto the Lord. Then the punishment of the Lord would not befall him. Pharaoh refused, and he reproached Moses and Aaron for supposedly distracting the people from their work. Pharaoh chased them away and made the Israelites' work even harder. The Egyptians supplied the straw up to that point, with which the Israelites made bricks when mixing it with clay. However, from then on they had to get hold of the straw themselves and still produce the same amount of bricks.

The burden became too heavy for the workers. The foremen bemoaned their fate with Pharaoh, but he had no mercy. The Israelites reproached Moses and Aaron, stating it was entirely their fault that they had to suffer so much.

Moses felt bitterly unhappy about this and he wanted to know from the Lord why he had brought him to Egypt? Instead of salvation, the people were abused even worse. However, the Lord encouraged him: "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh." Moses had to encourage the people and he had to reassure them that the Lord would keep his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord would deliver them and bring them to the land he had promised to their ancestors. The Israelites however, wanted nothing to do with Moses. The Lord commanded him to go and speak to Pharaoh but he replied despondently that Pharaoh would not listen to him for the Israelites do not even listen to him.

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7. The ten plagues and the institution of the Passover

Exodus 6 up to Exodus 12

God is omnipotent

God's eternal power was evident in the way he delivered his people from slavery through miraculous wonders. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God showed his omnipotence by performing miracles.
- God protected Israel.
- God executed that which He had promised.

The second meeting with Pharaoh

God send Moses and Aaron back to the Pharaoh and during this meeting, Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to perform a miracle. Moses told Aaron to throw his staff (cane) on the ground and it turned into a serpent. Pharaoh called his sorcerers and they could do it too, but then something special happened! Aaron's serpent devoured the sorcerers' snakes, because the Egyptian magicians' magic was subordinate to God's omnipotence.

The Egyptians considered snakes to be sacred animals and no one should kill them. Pharaoh even wore an emblem of a serpent on his crown, the uraeus. However, the arrogant Pharaoh remained stubborn and he was not impressed with this miracle. He would only let the Israelites go after ten plagues.

The ten plagues over Egypt

1. Water become blood

On God's instruction, Moses went to the Nile River to meet Pharaoh there. He said to the Pharaoh, "The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear." He warned Pharaoh that if he did not listen, the water of the Nile would turn into blood and all the fish would die.

The Nile would stink terribly. Pharaoh did not listen and Aaron raised his staff and struck before Pharaoh with his staff on the water of the Nile, turning the water into blood. God wanted Pharaoh to see and realize who the God of the Hebrews was. The Egyptian magicians, with their magic spells, turned the water which was in storage vessels also into blood, and that is why Pharaoh did not mind the plague and returned to his palace. There was blood, instead of water, in the Nile for seven days and all the Egyptians had to dig wells to get hold of water.

2. Frogs

Moses went to the Pharaoh again. Pharaoh had to let the Israelites go, otherwise God would harass his entire territory with frogs. Pharaoh did not listen, so Aaron stretched out his staff over the streams of water, canals and pits, and suddenly all of Egypt was swarming with frogs. The wizards of Pharaoh could have done the same with their magic tricks. The Egyptians considered frogs a symbol of fertility and venerated them. For example, their goddess of fertility, Heqet, is pictured with a frog head. This plague did make an impression on Pharaoh, because his magicians could not make the frogs disappear. He called Moses and Aaron and told them, "Pray to the Lord that He take away the frogs." Moses was prepared to do that. The frogs would disappear by the next day and he added, "That you may know that there is none like the Lord our God." Nevertheless, when the frogs disappeared, Pharaoh hardened his heart and he refused to let the Israelites move.

3. Lice

The Lord commanded Aaron to strike the ground with his staff. Suddenly, it was swarming with lice. Throughout Egypt, every speck of dust became lice. Both humans and animals were covered with lice. The wizards tried to imitate the plague, but they could not get it right. They warned Pharaoh, saying, "This is the finger of God," but Pharaoh remained stubborn.

4. Flies

Moses and Aaron warned the Pharaoh again. At God's command, swarms of flies came over the land. Only in Goshen, where the Israelites lived, there were no flies. Pharaoh's attitude began to change. He was going to allow Israel to sacrifice to their God, but they had to do it in Egypt. Moses pointed out to Pharaoh that this would not work, since, according to the Egyptians, Israel's sacrificial animals, bulls and rams, were sacred. Moses reiterated

that Pharaoh had to let them go into the wilderness for three days. Pharaoh agreed, but they must not have moved too far away. Moses prayed to the Lord and the flies disappeared the next day, but Pharaoh then changed his mind again. He hardened his heart and did not let the people go.

5. Livestock diseased

Moses again warned Pharaoh that if he did not allow the Israelites to serve their God, God would show his power by sending a very heavy pestilence among all his livestock. The livestock in Egypt would die on a large scale. Only the Israelites' livestock would not die. The Lord indicated exactly when this would happen, but Pharaoh did not mind. When the horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, and flocks began to die, Pharaoh sent his men to see if the Israelites' livestock died as well. They reported that this was not the case. However, he continued to harden his heart.

6. Boils

God's plagues had not directly affected the people of Egypt up to that point, but because Pharaoh would not listen, God acted more profoundly. Moses took hands full of soot from a furnace and threw it up in the air before Pharaoh. This fine powder caused boils all over Egypt over both man and animal, which kept festering. All the Egyptians and their animals were affected by the painful skin disease. The magicians were so full of boils that they could not even stand before Moses. Again, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites move.

7. Hail

Moses warned Pharaoh again. A terrible heavy hailstorm would erupt, like there had never been in the existence of Egypt. Every human and animal that would not be taken to safety but left outside in the field would die. Some of the Egyptians believed Moses's words and brought their slaves and animals to safety. When Moses stretched out his staff to heaven, thunder and hail came, wreaking great havoc. However, it did not take a toll in Goshen. Many people and animals died in Egypt and the Pharaoh admitted that he was wrong. If the Lord let the hail stop, he would let the people go. Moses stretched out his hands to heaven and the hail stopped, and yet again Pharaoh did not keep his word for he refused the Israelites to leave Egypt.

8. Locusts

Moses warned Pharaoh again the next day that if he refused to let the people go, a locust plague would come upon his land. His servants also spoke to him and he gave his permission for only the men to go, the women and children to remain in Egypt. God does not let Him be dictated! Moses stretched out his staff and an east wind blew swarms of locusts across Egypt. The grasshoppers ate up every little plant that survived after the hail. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron. He acknowledged his sin and begged Moses to pray to their God to ward off death (locusts) and thus Moses prayed and God blew the wind around and all the locusts blew into the Red Sea. The plague was over, but so was Pharaoh's remorse. He still refused to let the people go.

9. Darkness

The Lord commanded Moses to stretch out his hand to heaven, and Egypt was shrouded in darkness for three days. It was so dark in Egypt that one could feel it. It was a sign of God's wrath! God disrupted everything, and the Egyptians had nowhere to go. There was light only with the Israelites. Pharaoh gave the Israelites permission to go and sacrifice, but they had to leave their livestock behind. Moses did not want to get into an argument about it. The livestock had to go along. He even demanded that Pharaoh give permission that the sacrificial animals went along. Pharaoh became angry and chased him away. He threatened that he would kill Moses if he saw him again, to which Moses replied, "You have spoken correctly, I will not see your face again."

10. Death of the firstborn announced

Pharaoh would experience the full force of God's wrath and omnipotence in all His greatness. All the firstborn would die, including Pharaoh's firstborn. Then he would let Israel go, even chase them away. The Egyptians were in awe of Moses after everything that happened. They realized that he had indeed been sent by God.

Preparing to move away from Egypt

God used Moses as an instrument to speak to Pharaoh. God was finished speaking to the Pharaoh after the ninth plague. Pharaoh would bow before Him after the tenth plague.

The Israelites had to prepare for the move from Egypt. Moses told them what to do when they were commanded to move. They worked for many years as slaves, without any compensation, for the Egyptians and therefore they had to demand silver, gold and clothing from the Egyptians. It would serve as compensation, as the Lord had promised Abraham long before³⁷ and then later they had to build a tabernacle with the treasures for God³⁸.

The Israelites had to prepare a feast meal, the Passover. Passover is derived from a Hebrew word meaning, “passing” or “saving.” It refers to the Lord who passed by the homes of the Israelites and spared their firstborn. The Lord gave precise instructions on how they were to prepare and celebrate the meal.

The Passover was so important that God commanded them to make that day a day of remembrance, which they still celebrate to this day, for the glory of the Lord!

The Passover instituted

At the institution of the Passover, the Israelites received the following instructions:

- On the tenth day of the month of Abib (later called Nisan), the head of each household had to choose a goat or sheep lamb, a year-old ram without blemish, from his flock. If a household was too small to eat a whole lamb, they had to share one with another family.
- By the evening of the 14th day, everyone had to slaughter his lamb.
- The blood of the lamb had to be collected in a dish. After that, the blood had to be smeared with a bunch of hyssop on the doorframes of the house in which they celebrated Passover. The blood would be a signal to the angel of death, to pass by that house and spare the firstborn.
- No one was allowed to leave his house that night.
- They must not have broken any bone of the lamb.
- The lamb had to be roasted with head, paws and innards over a fire. Fire would destroy everything that was unclean.

37 Genesis 15: 14

“And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

38 Exodus 35: 5

“Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze;”

- All the meat had to be eaten that night and with no leftovers allowed. Everything that remained had to be burned. The meat had to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Unleavened bread was flat, round cakes without leaven.
- They had to eat standing, like people rushing. Everyone should have tied their upper garment or dress at their hips so they could move quickly. They had to put on sandals, hold their staff in their hands, and be ready to go on a journey.

The Passover a memorial day

The Lord instructed the Israelites to maintain the Passover annually and that they had to teach their descendants to celebrate it as a memorial day. The day was so important, that the month in which the day falls marks the beginning of the Jewish religious calendar. The Israelites had a twelve-month lunar year. Each month starts with the new moon and lasts about 29½ days. The year is then 354 days long and not 365 days, as we know it. This means that the Israelites' New Year does not always fall on the same day as our annual calendar. A thirteenth month, Adar, is sometimes added to their calendar to correct this.

After Passover, the Israelites celebrate the feast of the unleavened bread, which lasts from the 14th Abib (which is now called Nisan), to the evening of the 21st Abib. On the first day of the feast, the unleavened bread is eaten with the Easter meal and on the last day, it is again celebrated in honour of the Lord. The Israelites are not allowed to work then.

During the seven days that the festival lasts, the Israelites are not allowed to have any leaven or products containing leaven in their homes due to the believe that the leaven is a sign of sin. Just as sourdough pulls through the whole dough, so sin infects all life. The purpose of the festival is not only to remind the Israelites of the Exodus from Egypt, but also to warn them against sin.

The Meaning of Passover

The Passover as a memorial day aimed to remind the Israelites constantly of the deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, each time Passover was celebrated, parents had to tell their children how God had led them out of Egypt. The Passover was also a prospect of Christ's redemptive work, not only for the Jews but also for all who believe in God.

Passover depicts, among other things, the following

- Christ was the paschal lamb who died for our sins³⁹. As proof of that, the paschal lamb's bones must not be broken. It pointed to Christ's bones that were not broken⁴⁰, though it was custom to break the bones of criminals who were crucified.
- As the blood of the lamb on the doorposts spared the Israelites from death, so the blood of Christ saved the sinner from eternal destruction.
- Those who ate of the paschal lamb and unleavened bread had a connection with God. Likewise, Christ's death on the cross assures us that we live in an everlasting covenant with Him.

Christ instituted communion at his last Passover, for the Passover was fulfilled in the death on the cross of Christ. At the Lord's Supper, we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and celebrate His resurrection. It also points us to the fellowship in which we live with Him and with each other as a congregation.⁴¹

The last plague

On the 14th day of the month of Abib, each family slaughtered a lamb, as the Lord had commanded. After that, they prepared for the Passover. The eating of the Passover by the Israelites was an act of faith for they all put their trust in the Lord who would deliver them out of Egypt. At midnight on that particular day, the cries of parents whose children had died broke the silence of the night. The Lord carried out his last plague. In every Egyptian house, the firstborn died.

This included the firstborn of their animals, which also died. Pharaoh's eldest son, the crown prince, also died. God's patience with Pharaoh had ended. Pharaoh immediately summoned Moses and Aaron and commanded them to leave Egypt immediately. The Israelites were allowed to take all their possessions with them. Pharaoh wanted no one and nothing left of them in Egypt any longer.

The Egyptians insisted with Pharaoh that the Israelites' trek had to be made

39 1 Corinthians 5: 7 "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

40 John 19: 33 "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs."

41 Mark 14: 22 "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

as soon as possible. They were afraid that if the Israelites stayed any longer, they too would die. The silver, gold, and clothing that the Israelites demanded of them they gave willingly. They were only too happy that the Israelites were moving away⁴².

The Israelites left in such a hurry that there was not even an opportunity to make provisions for their journey. There was no time to sour the dough either and therefore they took the dough with them just like that. Later, they made unleavened cakes from it. The leaven was a sign of sin and so it had to be left behind in Egypt. They kept their ancestors' promise to Joseph⁴³ and took his bones with them, that they might be buried in Canaan. Centuries later, Jesus and his parents also returned to Canaan (Palestine) from Egypt⁴⁴.

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42 Psalm 105: 38 "Egypt was glad when they departed, For the fear of them had fallen upon them."

43 Genesis 50: 25 "Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely [a]visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.""

44 Matthew 2: 15 "And was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son.""

8. The Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt

Exodus 13 up to Exodus 18

The Faithfulness of God

God is faithful in everything He promise and everything He does. He stayed trustworthy even when His people were unfaithful. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God promised He would deliver His people from Egypt, and He did.
- The Lord guided his people through the desert.
- God guided them and provided for them.

The Exodus

The Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years, and it was time for them to return to the Promised Land of Canaan. God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was fulfilled⁴⁵. More than 600 000 men migrated with the women and children from Egypt and in total they were probably more than 2 million people. A number of strangers also rallied. The Lord allowed them to be absorbed into His people after they were circumcised.

Pharaoh only let the Israelites go after the tenth plague where all the firstborns of the Egyptians died. The Israelites belonged to God because God spared their firstborn. The eldest son in each family was to be consecrated to the Lord and therefore had to become a priest. This service was later passed on to the descendants of Levi⁴⁶. This meant that the firstborn son of each family had to be ransomed. Jesus' parents, too, took him to the temple to pay the prescribed ransom for him⁴⁷.

The Israelites gathered at Raamses, one of the supply cities they had built for the Egyptians. The exodus began there. Everything happened in a fast

45 Genesis 12: 7

"Egypt Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him."

46 Number 3: 6

"Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him."

47 Luke 2: 22

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord"

and orderly fashion. The men walked and the women and children rode on pack animals. The Exodus from Egypt was a very important event in the history of Israel because God's people became free and self-reliant from then on. Unfortunately though they did not fully trust in the Lord, for they took some of the Egyptian idols with them⁴⁸.

From Raamses to Pi Hahiroth

Travelling from Egypt to Canaan was not difficult. An existing road ran from Egypt through Canaan to Mesopotamia in the east. It was the shortest road and was constantly used by merchants. It would have taken the Israelites two to three weeks to reach Canaan by this route. Nevertheless, Moses himself did not determine the route they were to follow. God decided where they should go. He revealed his presence among His people by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire. These were signs of God's presence. God moved with them.

The pillar of cloud did not lead them up the familiar road to Canaan, but eastward to Succoth. From there they travelled further in the same direction to Etam, on the side of the desert. There the Egyptians had fortifications to protect their country's eastern border. The Israelites camped there. The Lord protected his people by not letting them fight with the Philistines. The Philistines were trained soldiers, and the Israelites could have become discouraged if they had to fight at that early stage.

The Israelites received the instruction from God to turn around there and set up camp in front of Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the Red Sea. God had a definite purpose with this, even though the trek seemed aimless. When Pharaoh heard about it, he assumed that the Israelites had gone astray, that they were trapped between the desert and the sea. He must have thought to himself that he could easily locate and attack them, for he already regretted letting the people go, because he still had not learned his lesson.

The Red sea crossing

Pharaoh and his soldiers rushed after the Israelites with 600 chariots. When

48 Ezekiel 20: 8

“But they rebelled against Me and would not [a]bsey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfil My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'”

the Israelites saw the dust cloud, they became terrified. They thought they would all die in the desert, but Moses encouraged them.

The pillar of cloud moved between the Israelites and Pharaoh's soldiers with the result that it was very dark on the side of the Egyptians, but on the side of the Israelites, it was light. Moses, at the command of the Lord, stretched out his staff over the sea. A strong easterly wind came up and blew the water away from the sea. The bottom of the sea dried up, and the Israelites passed through safely.

The Egyptians followed them. At dawn, the Lord brought the Egyptians into confusion. Their chariots' wheels sank away into the mud! They wanted to turn around but could not. Moses again, at the command of the Lord, stretched out his staff and the water flowed back. The entire Egyptian army disappeared under the water together with Pharaoh and every one of them drowned⁴⁹.

The Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians wash up. They saw the miracles of the Lord and they believed in Him. Under the leadership of Moses and Miriam, they sang a victory song to the glory of the Lord: "I want to sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. He cast the horse and its rider into the sea." In the book of Revelation, we read that the believers will sing the song of Moses again one day⁵⁰.

The Lord provides water

The Israelites were thankful when they moved away from the Red Sea. The Lord delivered them from the Egyptians. The pillar of cloud led them further south. The desert of Etam, a part of the great desert of Shur, lay stretched out before them. It was very difficult to travel through a desert. Israel was a great nation who had a lot of livestock with them. The journey progressed slowly and drinking water for both humans and animals were a problem.

After three days, they came to Marah. There was a lot of water, but it tasted bitter and they could not drink it. The people already forgot that God saved them from impossible circumstances. They did not trust in the Lord and complained to Moses that they were thirsty. Moses' trust in God was stronger

49 Psalm 136: 15

"But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His mercy endures forever;"

50 Revelation 15: 3

"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvellous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints!"

than that of the people. He prayed to God for assistance. The Lord showed him a tree, which he had to throw into the water. Moses did as instructed and immediately the Israelites were able to drink the water.

It wasn't a particular special tree he threw in the water. Rather, the miracle was a sign of God's power. The Lord showed through that miracle that He was taking care of the people, but they had to trust in Him and obey Him. We must also trust In God and obey Him. This applies to all areas of our life⁵¹.

The Lord provides meat

The Israelites moved from Marah to Elim. There was an oasis with 12 fountains and 70 palm trees. After all the hardships in the desert, it was the ideal resting place. The people camped there and enjoyed their stay, but after a while, they were on their way to Canaan again. In the desert of Sin, through which they passed, food was very scarce. They forgot that the Lord had promised to take care of them and reproached Moses and Aaron complaining it was their fault, because they were starving. They wished they had stayed behind in Egypt because it felt to them like they would die in the desert.

The Lord promised Moses that he would make his glory known to the people by providing them with meat and bread in a special way. The Lord also tested them to see if they would obey Him.

Moses commissioned Aaron to make the people appear before the Lord and they looked in the direction of the pillar of cloud. Suddenly the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The Lord spoke to Moses. He had to tell the people that they would have enough meat to eat by that evening and that they would also get bread the next morning. Then they would know that the Lord is their God. That evening there were thousands of quails near the camp, and the Israelites caught as many quails as they wanted. Quails were birds migrating northward from Africa in spring. The birds were tired after the long flight, and thus the Israelites were able to catch them easily. The Lord used that natural miracle to feed his people. Only God can work such wonders.

51 Romans 11: 36

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

The Lord provides manna

The next morning there was a layer of dew around the camp and when the dew disappeared, the people saw something lying on the ground. "What is it?" they asked each other. *Man hu* are the Hebrew words for "what is it?" Moses explained to them, it was the bread, the Lord provided, each person had to gather one omer (about 2¼ litres) of manna, and when they measured with the omer how much they collected, it was precisely enough. They were not allowed to leave anything for the next day.

Early each morning, they were able to gather up the day's manna however, some Israelites did not listen and kept some of the manna for the next day, but the next morning it was full of worms.

On the sixth day, they were surprised to find that they could pick up enough manna for two days. They told this to Moses and he explained to them that there would be no manna on the Sabbath (seventh day). What was left on the sixth day they had to store for the Sabbath, and this time that extra manna did not go bad. The Israelites who wanted to pick up manna on the seventh day could not find anything.

The Lord taught his people to respect the Sabbath and to entrust Him with everything. They did not live from bread alone, but from everything that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord⁵². The manna is indicative of Jesus Christ. He is the bread of life; whoever goes to Him will never again go hungry⁵³.

Water from the rock

The Israelites moved on to Rephidim, but there was no water. The people complained to Moses again and threatened to stone him for once again they did not trust in the Lord. However, Moses turned to God and asked the Lord what he should do. He was then commissioned to take the elders of the people to a rock on Mount Horeb, where the Lord would be. The Lord instructed him to strike the rock with his staff. Moses did what the Lord commanded him,

52 Deuteronomy 8: 3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."

53 John 6: 35 "And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

and water flowed out of the rock. He named the place Massah and Meribah and it means “temptation and strife.” The rock is indicative of Christ⁵⁴. Who believes in Him will never be thirsty⁵⁵.

Victory over the Amalekites

Amalek came to Rephidim to fight Israel. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau⁵⁶. They lived in the Southland, from where they moved around to look for pasture for their livestock. The Amalekites noted that Israel had a lot of livestock and, along with the little pasture available, they saw the Israelites’ livestock as a threat to their own animals’ nutrition. Moses commanded Joshua to fight the Amalekites. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim and his name was Hosea at first, but Moses changed it to Joshua⁵⁷.

This was a battle royal between believers and infidel, between God and Satan. Satan wanted to destroy Israel because he wanted to prevent the birth of Christ. The battle between Jacob and Esau continued between their descendants as well.

Moses realised that the Israelites were not well-trained soldiers and their only chance of winning would be with God’s help. He sat down on the top of a hill with the staff of God in his hand and held the staff up in the air with his hands. As long as he had strength to hold the staff aloft, the Israelites won, but as he grew weary and lowered his arms, the Amalekites would get the upper hand. Aaron and Hur came to help him by making him sit on a rock and they held his arms up for him. Moses persevered in prayer, and when the sunset, the Amalekites were defeated. Moses’ actions pointed to Christ who also prays continuously for us with his heavenly Father⁵⁸. The Lord told Moses that He would wipe out the Amalekites. Moses, out of gratitude, built an altar in honour of God, which he called “the Lord is my banner.”

54	1 Corinthians 10: 4	“and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”
55	John 7: 37	“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”
56	Genesis 36: 12	“Now Timnah was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau’s son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau’s wife.”
57	Numbers 13: 16	“These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.”
58	Hebrews 7 : 25	“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Jethro's Advice

After the battle with the Amalekites, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visited him. He also brought Zipporah, Gershom and Eliezer with him. Jethro was very happy to hear that the Lord had delivered Israel from the Egyptians. He then took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to the glory of God. Aaron and all the elders of Israel ate bread with Jethro in the face of God.

During his visit, Jethro also saw that Moses had to solve everyone's problems. Moses was the judge in each and every dispute. Jethro told Moses that he could not do all the work alone because it was just too much work for one person and then he recommended to Moses that he should appoint able men who feared God, trustworthy men who hated unjust gain, who could help him. Moses would still have heard the great matters, still taught the laws of the Lord to the people, and also revealed God's will to them, for he was God's representative to the people.

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he suggested. Moses appointed the men, and they administered justice in the small matters, bringing the big matters to Moses.

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9. God gave His law to His people

Exodus 19 up to Exodus 33

The Covenant with God

God committed himself to His people by making a covenant with them. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God chose Israel as his property, because He wanted to be a God to them.
- Israel would be God's people and therefore He gave them His commandments as a guide for how they should live.
- Believers are to obey God's commandments

Israel were the Lord's people

Three months after Israel left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness (desert) of Sinai. They camped opposite Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb (also called the mountain of God) was the place where the Angel of the Lord first appeared to Moses in the burning bush of thorns. The Lord had already told Moses on a previous occasion that the people would one day serve Him on that mountain⁵⁹. That time came and God introduced Himself to His people in a special way on Mount Horeb.

Moses ascended the mountain to God, while the people formed a laager (encampment). God commissioned Moses to remind the people of the way He had delivered them out of Egypt. He cared for and protected them by behaving like an eagle that would protect its chicks. They were God's property, so Israel had to obey Him and not break His covenant. They had to be a kingdom of priests, putting their lives in the service of the Lord. The Bible also calls us as believers to dedicate our lives to Him as kings and priests⁶⁰.

59 Exodus 3: 12

“So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

60 1 Peter 2: 9

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;”

God's purpose in delivering his people was to live in covenant with them that is why God referred to Israel as His son. He picked them out, without them earning it. He would be a God to them. Israel had to be his people and live holy before him. The people replied that they would do it all. They were getting ready to meet Him at the command of the Lord. They cleansed themselves and washed their clothes.

God also commanded Moses to draw a boundary along the foot of the mountain; no one was allowed to cross that line and should someone do cross the line, they had to stone the culprit or shoot them to death with an arrow.

The Lord appeared to His people

The people saw a dense cloud on Mount Sinai on the third day and thunderbolts and lightning flashed and echoed through the air. The people heard a heavenly trumpet echo while God descended on the mountain in a fire. The mountain trembled and smoked just like an oven. Moses led the people closer to the mountain. They trembled with fear. The Lord spoke aloud to Moses so that all the people could hear Him. At God's command, Moses climbed the mountain up again where he received the command to warn the people that no one should go up the mountain, not even the priests. These events were poignant. The people saw God's power and glory!

The Ten Commandments

The Lord announced his law, while the people stood before the mountain and so that everyone could hear him. God, through the law, addressed every facet of their life, which they had to live according to His will. The law applied to all Israelites. Two aspects emerged clearly in the law:

- We are to love God above all with all our heart and soul.
- We are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves⁶¹.

God required the people to keep all His commandments so that they could

61 Luke 10: 27

“So he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and ‘your neighbour as yourself.’”

live through them⁶². Yet they were of sin, and thus unable to keep the law⁶³. We are also incapable of keeping the law and therefore every human being deserves to be punished by God⁶⁴.

Yet Jesus Christ did that which was impossible for man. The following is important:

- Christ completely obeyed everything the law required⁶⁵.
- Christ bore the punishment that was meant for us⁶⁶.

Christ was the conclusion of the law⁶⁷. Believers do not live by their own strength, but by the power of Christ⁶⁸. Therefore, we do not have to keep the law in order to be saved by it. We want to live according to the law of God out of gratitude in order to serve Him through it.

The people trembled in God's presence. They asked Moses to speak to God on their behalf because they would die if the Lord spoke to them any longer. Moses encouraged them, and he drew near to the cloud of darkness in which God was and there the Lord God revealed more laws to Moses. Moses stayed on the mountain for a while, and he wrote down all the laws, provisions and institutions in a book. It is called the book of the covenant.

Conclusion of the Covenant

Upon his return to the people, Moses built an altar with twelve stones around it. The twelve stones represented the twelve tribes of Israel. A few young men helped him slaughter a few bulls as a thank-offering. Moses collected

62	Romans 10: 5	"For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."
63	Romans 3: 12	"They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."
64	Ephesians 2: 3	"Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."
65	Hebrews 5: 9	"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,"
66	Hebrews 2: 17	"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
67	Romans 10: 4	"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."
68	Galatians 3: 26	"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

the blood and poured half of it against the altar. He then read to them from the book of the Covenant.

The people promised to keep all those laws and institutions. Moses sprinkled the other half of the blood on them. This is how God concluded the covenant with them. God, by sprinkling the blood on his people and the altar, bound them to him. The blood was a sign that God had taken away the sin of the people but the blood was also indicative to Christ's blood, which He would shed for sinners on the cross⁶⁹.

The Lord reaffirmed the covenant He made with Abraham, now also with His people. They were His people. He set them apart and sanctified them, for out of their descendants the Saviour would be born. The Saviour who would crush the head of the serpent⁷⁰, and that is why they were to obey Him and serve Him alone.

The Stone Tablets with the Ten Commandments

Moses climbed the mountain again and by order of the Lord, he took Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, as well as 70 elders of Israel with him. They stood at a distance, while Moses climbed higher. They could behold the glory of the Lord from a distance. They then had a sacrificial banquet as a sign of their union with God.

God wanted to give Moses the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments on them. Joshua went with Moses, while Aaron and Hur remained with the people. When Moses ascended the mountain, a cloud covered the mountain, so that the glory of the Lord was clearly visible for six days. On the seventh day, the Lord called to Moses from the cloud. God followed the same pattern as He followed at creation, for God is a God of order.

It seemed to the people, the encounter Moses had with the Lord, was like a fire that consumed everything. Moses stayed inside the cloud for 40 days and 40 nights. The Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone and gave it to Moses. He also gave Moses careful instructions on how to build the sanctuary, God's tabernacle. The Lord would dwell with them in

69 Colossians 1: 20 "And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."
70 Genesis 3: 15 "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed;He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

the tabernacle⁷¹. The word tabernacle literally means “a portable sanctuary.”

The Ark of the Covenant (Testimony)

Not only did the Lord give the instructions for his dwelling place, but he also showed Moses what it should look like⁷².

God demanded the following from His people:

- They had to sacrifice precious metals and other substances to Him so that they could build the tabernacle for the Lord.
- They had to make the Lord a sanctuary, an ark with supports from acacia wood (thorn wood) and cover it with gold. They had to make a mercy seat of pure gold and place it on top of the ark. There had to be two cherubim, one on each side, on top of the mercy seat. The cherubim had to touch each other with their wings, so that they enfolded the ark with their wings and they had to face down. The Lord would tell Moses what to put in the ark. The mercy seat was the throne of the Lord and He would speak to Moses from the mercy seat.
- The table and supports wood beams (poles) had to be made of acacia wood and it had to be plated with pure gold. They also had to make dishes, pans, pitchers (jugs), bowls and cups of pure gold. There always had to be bread on the table, for the bread would be proof that the Lord always provided everything as needed for His people. The bread also points to Jesus because He is the bread of life⁷³.
- A lampstand (chandelier) with a pedestal had to be made out of pure gold. The chandelier had to have a stem (shaft), calyxes (knobs), buds and flowers. It had to look like a twig standing in bloom. The lampstand had to be made exactly as God had shown Moses. The oil of the lampstand had to be from pure olive oil. The lampstand would give light in the house

71 Numbers 5: 3

“You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.”

72 Hebrews 8: 5

“Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

73 John 6: 51

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

of the Lord. Like the bread, the lampstand also pointed to Christ. He is the light to the world⁷⁴. That is why his followers are called the children of light⁷⁵.

- The tabernacle was to be made of blue, purple and scarlet (red) fine woven linen. A tent sail made of goats hair (mo-hair), had to be strung over the linen. Red-painted ram and badger skins had to be pulled over the mo-hair sails. A veil would divide the tabernacle into the Holy place and the inner sanctum of the Most Holy place (Holy of Holies). The veil would consist of white linen, and fabrics of purple, blue and scarlet. The tables had to stand in the Holy place on the north side and the lampstand on the south side. The Altar of Incense had to stand in the middle right in front of the veil. The Ark of the Covenant would stand in the Holy of Holies.
- In the forecourt, the Altar of the burnt offering had to stand together with all its tools. The ash pots, shovels, basins, forks and fire pans had to be made of copper. The animals that the priests would sacrifice on the burnt-offering altar had to be completely burned to ashes. The total burning of the offering referred to the people's sin and the fact that they actually ought to be destroyed before God. In place of the sinner, a sacrificial animal would be burned, but this animal could not pay for the sinner's sin. This sacrificial animal was indicative of Christ, for only Christ would be the perfect sacrifice⁷⁶.
- Only the priests were allowed to enter the Holy place of the tabernacle, but not the people. It was a privilege for the ordinary Israelite to stay only in the forecourts of the Lord⁷⁷.
- Aaron had to be anointed as the first high priest. He was the shadow

74 Revelation 21: 23 "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine [a]in it, for the [b]glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light."

75 John 12: 36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them."

76 Hebrews 9: 11-12 "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things [a]to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

77 Psalm 84: 3 "Even the sparrow has found a home, And the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young— Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God."

image of Christ, our only High Priest⁷⁸. The high priest must have worn a breastplate and an ephod.

- The breastplate and shoulder garment was to be made of gold and of the same coloured material as the veil. The breastplate had to be attached to the shoulder pieces of the ephod with gold rings and gold strings. Six names on each stone. Therefore, the high priest had to bring the people to remembrance before God. On the breastplate were twelve different gemstones, each with the name of a tribe of Israel engraved on it. He also had to carry the people on his heart by praying and sacrificing for them. The twelve gemstones indicated the value God attaches to his people. In the New Jerusalem, the foundation of the city will be decorated with the same gemstones⁷⁹.
- In the breastplate, Moses had to put the Urim and the Thummim. Aaron constantly had to ask for the will of God and the bricks would show the people which path to follow. That is why the breastplate is called the “breastplate of decision.” Decision means “ruling” or “verdict.”
- The high priest had to wear under the ephod a cloak and dress that was beautifully decorated. The cloak had to be purple and at the seam, there had to be pomegranates and golden bells. Around the cloak, he had to wear a multicoloured sash. The bells would remind the high priest to live holy before God. The pomegranates would again point to the vigour that God gives.
- On his head, the high priest had to wear a turban, on which there was a golden plate in the shape of a flower. On the plate were to be engraved the words “HOLY UNTO THE LORD.”
- The high priest was not allowed to wear shoes. He had to walk barefoot out of respect for the Lord.
- On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to sprinkle the blood of

78 Hebrews 8: 1

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

79 Revelation 21: 19-20

“The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.”

a sacrificial animal on the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies to atone for the people's sin.

- The sons of Aaron were to serve as priests. They had to wear dresses, belts, beanies and linen trousers to portray their holiness before the Lord. They had to work in the tabernacle, where they would offer sacrifices to the Lord and intercede for the people.
- The priests had to be consecrated before they could perform their work of service. They had to be thoroughly washed, after which they had to put on their priestly garments. Thereafter, the sacrifices would follow with the laying on of hands, sprinkling of blood, and the stroke of the blood on the earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe.
- Every day the priests had to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. The word sacrifice or offering means “to present or proffer something to someone who can then either accept or reject what is given” and also “to provide or present a gift.” The sinner would offer something to God through a sacrifice, as a sign that he stands guilty before God. There were several different kinds of sacrifices. A lamb was to be slaughtered as a sin offering (expiatory) every morning and every evening. Along with the lamb, fine flour had to be sacrificed with oil and wine. This sacrifice would serve as atonement for the people's sin. The sacrifice had to be offered before the people entered to the Lord, so the burnt-offering altar had to stand in the courtyard. The Israelites had to offer a thanks- (votive) offering out of gratitude for the Lord's goodness and care. Tithing would also form part of the thank offerings.
- Incense had to be sacrificed every morning and evening so that a pleasant smell could hang from the scent-offering altar. The incense as a sweet fragrance had to ascend to God. This would symbolize the prayers of the saints who constantly prayed to God⁸⁰.
- Each person over the age of 20 had to pay half a shekel as an atonement fee for their sin. The money was to be used for the service in the tabernacle.
- The copper basin had to stand in the courtyard, between the burnt

80 Revelation 5: 8

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

offering altar and the tabernacle. The priests had to wash their hands and feet in it before they could enter the tabernacle. The water, as at baptism, indicated the washing away of sins⁸¹. The priests had to wash so they could stand holy before God. After the justification at the burnt offering altar, the sanctification would follow at the basin.

- Moses received more instructions, including how to make oil with which to anoint holy persons and objects. It consisted of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus (sedge) and cassia (Chinese cinnamon) which had to be mixed with olive oil. God also gave him instructions for making the incense that was to be burned on the incense altar. It consisted of sweet gum (aka liquidambar / from the American gum tree), cloves, galbanum, and pure frankincense and salt.
- The people were again commanded to keep the Sabbath, as an everlasting covenant and sign between the Lord and Israel. They were also required to rest their fields every Sabbath year (seventh year), free all slaves, and restore land ownership in the jubilee (50th year). The people were to celebrate the Passover as a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt and, 50 days later, the Feast of Pentecost. During the Feast of Pentecost, the Israelites had to offer their first grain of the new harvest to the Lord.

God himself appointed two artists, Bezalel and Aholiab, and qualified them to produce all the beautiful works of art, objects and clothing.

God, after all the instructions, gave Moses two tablets of stone, on which he wrote his law with his finger.

The people have since instituted their own worship, for according to them, Moses stayed away too long.

The Golden Calf

The people began to doubt whether Moses would ever return and felt lost without him. So they demanded from Aaron to make them gods who could go before them. They still wanted to serve the Lord, but they wanted a “picture” of him that they could see. Aaron took their golden earrings and poured from them an image of a golden calf, telling them that it was the god who delivered

81 Acts 22: 16

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

them from Egypt and by that, he meant the Lord. However, this was not a true religion, but idolatry, since they wanted to worship God in a self-willed way. The Lord's omnipotence cannot be captured in images, so God forbade any imagery of Him⁸². God wants to be worshipped in spirit and in truth⁸³.

God had already told Moses on the mountain what had happened in the camp. God was livid and wanted to consume the people and bring a new nation forth from only Moses.

Moses then begged God for mercy and thus Moses thereby showed that he was truly a priest to the people. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of the Lord. He feared that the Egyptians would mock God if they heard of the Israelites' destruction. Moses reminded God of his promises to the patriarchs and after Moses' plea, the Lord repented of the evil he wanted to bring upon His people. The people would be preserved; not based on their own actions, but based on God's grace.

Moses came to Joshua, Joshua said that there was a noise of war coming from the camp, but Moses was sure that he heard antiphonal singing, however when Moses drew near the camp, he saw the golden calf and the people dancing around it. He was so angry that he threw the stone tablets to pieces on the ground. He sternly addressed Aaron and ordered him to burn the golden calf. He then finely ground it and poured the ashes into the water and the people had to drink it. Moses then stood in the gate of the camp and called all who were for the Lord (on the Lord's side), to him. All the boys from the tribe of Levi gathered with him. He sent them in among the people and they killed about 3,000 men with their swords. The priestly office (sacerdogy) was then assigned to the Levites. Before these events, all men in Israel could have offered sacrifices, but after these events, only the men from the descendants of Aaron (the Levites) could offer sacrifices.

Moses the intercessor for the people

The next morning Moses pointed the people to the great sin they had committed. Perhaps he could atone for their sin. He again pleaded with the Lord to forgive their sin. The Lord wanted to send an angel to guide them further, but Moses pleaded with the Lord that He Himself should be their

82 Exodus 20: 4

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;."

83 John 4: 24

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

guide again. The covenant that the people had broken had to be renewed. Moses was even willing to die in the place of the people, but God would not punish Moses for their sins. The people also repented by taking off all their decorations.

Moses pitched his tent outside the camp and called it the tent of assembly and they later called the tabernacle the tent of assembly. Moses went into his tent and talked to God. The pillar of cloud covered the entrance to the tent, while the people all bowed down at their tents and thus Moses pleaded with God every day, until He showed mercy to the people and gave the people permission to move again. The covenant was restored. In this, Moses was also the shadow image of Christ. Christ pleaded with God for sinners, just as Moses pleaded with God for His people.

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10. Israel roams the wilderness

Exodus 34; Leviticus 9 and Leviticus 10; Numbers 9 up to Numbers 14, Numbers 16 and Numbers 17

God has always demanded obedience

Israel did not trust in the Lord, and did what they thought was good in their own eyes and thus they brought the punishment of the Lord upon them. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God remained merciful even though His people sinned.
- Yet the Lord did not let their disobedience go unpunished.
- God does not tolerate rebellion against his authority.

Moses climbed the mountain again

Moses, after the covenant was restored, went up the mountain again with two other hewn tablets of stone. He angrily smashed the first two tablets of stone (on which God wrote the Ten Commandments) because the people had made themselves a golden calf. The Lord would write the Ten Commandments again on the new tablets of stone. Moses, just like the previous time, stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights, but the people did not turn away from God again. Moses' face shone so much with God's glory that he had to put a veil on his face when he came back to the people.

The Israelites did not immediately move on, but stayed in Sinai for a few more months. God was their King and He wanted them to live in an orderly fashion. During that time, there were many matters had to be cleared according to the laws and the instructions they received, where they had to get their religious and social lifestyles in order. These laws and instructions are recorded in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The people, by order of God, built the tabernacle at Sinai. It was a big tent and it was a sign of God's presence with His people. A year after their exodus from Egypt, the tabernacle was consecrated on the first day of the first month (Abib). The pillar of cloud then came down from the mountain and covered the tabernacle. The Lord lived with his people and when the cloud departed from the tabernacle before the Israelites, they moved after the cloud, but if the cloud didn't move away, they stayed where they were until it moved on.

The cloud of the Lord was by day a cloud and by night, it was a fire above the tabernacle. The tabernacle went with the people, and where the people camped, so did the tabernacle.

A tragic event occurred during the Israelites' stay at Sinai. Aaron and his sons were segregated by God for the priestly and sacrificial service. At the first sacrifice of Aaron, God Himself lit the sacrifice from the pillar of cloud. Then Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, sacrificed without the Lord instructing them to do so. Thus, they practiced self-willed religion because they did not seek the glory of God, but acted out of their own consideration. Before everyone a bolt of lightning struck from the pillar of cloud, killing Nadab and Abihu.

Israel departed from Sinai

The Israelites commemorated the Passover peacefully in the desert at Sinai for the first time. They thought back to the deliverance from Egypt. The pillar of cloud above the tabernacle was their guarantee that the Lord was with them. They stood orderly, according to tribes, around the tabernacle.

The pillar of cloud lifted from the tabernacle a few weeks later and began to move. Everything happened in an orderly manner. The Levites carried the ark and thus they were the first to follow the pillar of cloud. Thereafter the people from different divisions followed, according to their tribes. Each division had its own commander and banner. The tribe of Judah was first. The pillar of cloud moved away from the tabernacle every time they had to move and it came to a stop every time the people had to set up camp. Moses prayed to the Lord every time the ark moved or stood still. Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law moved out of Sinai with them. He knew the desert well and was of great help to them. They moved from Sinai in a northerly direction to the desert of Paran.

Taberah

After a three-day journey, the Israelites had moved up to Taberah and again they complained about their circumstances. The Lord became angry and the fire of the Lord ignited the side of the camp. Once again, Moses interceded for the people and God answered Moses' prayer by extinguishing the fire. They named the place Taberah that means, "Place that burns."

Kibroth Hattaavah

The trek did not progress far before the people started complaining again, this time about their food being the same every day. They harkened back to the meat and fish, cucumbers, watermelons and onions they had eaten in Egypt. This time Moses became very impatient with them and he wanted to know from the Lord why he was burdened with such a great task? The burden of leading the people became too heavy for him.

The Lord showed his mercy again. He instructed Moses to gather before the tabernacle, 70 of the elder men together. Those 70 men were filled with the Spirit of God and they prophesied. Two of the 70 elders, Eldad and Medad, remained in the camp to prophesy. Joshua wanted Moses to forbid it, but Moses would not. Instead, he wished all the people to be Spirit-inspired prophets, and the prophet Joel also prophesied that God would pour out his Spirit on people⁸⁴. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Moses' wish and Joel's prophecy were fulfilled.

The Lord gave meat to the people, but at the same time He also punished them for being so ungrateful, and with a wind God had blown thousands of quail towards the camp so that later they lay three-quarters of a meter high in the camp. The people were very pleased and picked up bags full of quail to eat. Yet they were too desirous, and God punished them for it with a strange disease that broke out among them, and many Israelites died. They called the place Kibroth Hattaavah, meaning, "there they buried the people who had yielded to craving."

Dissension of Aaron and Miriam

Moses married a Cushitic woman (Ethiopian woman). The Cushites were from Ethiopia in Africa. His first wife, Zipporah, was probably deceased. Miriam and Aaron resented him for having a new marriage. They told Moses that the Lord not only spoke to him, but also to them. After all, Miriam was a prophetess and Aaron the high priest. In fact, they were just jealous of Moses and questioned his leadership.

The Lord brought Moses, Miriam, and Aaron to the tabernacle and pointed out to them that He was speaking directly to Moses. This was different from the other prophets, who saw faces or dreamed dreams. Miriam got leprosy

84 Joel 2: 28

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions."

as punishment. Moses prayed to God at Aaron's request, and He cured Miriam's leprosy. Miriam remained outside the camp for seven days as the Lord commanded.

Spies send into Canaan

The Israelites moved through the desert of Paran and arrived at the southern border of Canaan. There, at the command of the Lord, Moses sent out twelve spies (one of each tribe) to explore the land. They travelled up to northern parts of Canaan and returned after 40 days. They were very impressed with the fertility of Canaan and brought with them some of the fruit (pomegranates and figs) and a grape bunch so large that two men had to carry it with a stick!

The spies then reported to Moses, Aaron, and the entire assembly of the Israelites at Kadesh in the Paran desert. At the meeting they informed everyone that the land was overflowing with milk and honey and also showed them the fruit they had brought with them. However, the spies warned that the people living in the country were strong and all the cities were fortified and very large. They also saw the descendants of Anak (giants) there. They were afraid of the Canaanites, and ten of the spies discouraged the people from invading Canaan. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, trusted in the Lord and recommended that the people enter Canaan. The people were upset and wept throughout the night. They reproached Moses and Aaron for delivering them to the Canaanites and they argued that they rather should have stayed in Egypt or died in the desert. The people wanted a different leader one that would lead them back to Egypt. They also wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, but the glory of God appeared in the tabernacle. The Lord wanted to annihilate all the people and just make Moses a great nation, but again Moses pleaded with the Lord to spare the people. God's honour was at stake. Nations would scoff and say Israel was destroyed because they couldn't take Canaan. Moses pleaded intensely to prevent God from destroying His people⁸⁵.

The Lord answered Moses' prayer, but He also punished the unbelievers. All the people would wander in the desert for 40 years and everyone over the age of 20 (except Moses, Joshua and Caleb) would die there and not enter the promised lands. Their children would move into Canaan. The ten unbelieving spies died instantly. The people tried to correct their disbelief by

85 Deuteronomy 9: 25

"Thus I prostrated myself before the Lord; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the Lord had said He would destroy you."

attacking Canaan. Yet they suffered a crushing defeat because God was not with them

The wanderings in the desert

The people had to turn around at Kadesh, on the border of Canaan, because they did not trust in the Lord and were afraid of the Canaanites. They had already been in the wilderness for two years, and they would be wandering in the wilderness for another 38 years because of their disbelief.

The wanderings in the desert were accompanied by much toil and hardships. Many Israelites died in the wilderness. Of all their exploits during those 40 years, only a few events are recorded in the Bible.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled

The people once again blamed Moses and Aaron for their difficult circumstances. Their leadership was frequently in the firing line. The people would not accept that Moses and Aaron were called by God to be their leaders and thus their rebellion against Moses and Aaron was actually a rebellion against the Lord.

Three men holding important positions, namely Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, rebelled against Moses and Aaron. Korah was from the tribe of Levi, while Dathan and Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben. Korah was jealous of Aaron and his sons, to whom the Lord entrusted the priesthood. He was a descendant of Levi, so he believed that he could also have performed priestly service. Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses' leadership. They were from the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, so they were of the opinion that they, themselves were to lead the people.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram soon enjoyed a large following among the people. More than 250 prominent men sided with the three rebels. Moses was so disappointed when the mob came to him and his brother, that he fell with his face down on the ground. At the command of the Lord, Moses instructed Korah and his band to come to the tabernacle the next morning, each with its fire pan and incense. The next morning the Lord would designate whom He chose as priests. Aaron would be there too

It was an important task of the priest to bring the incense offering. This

suggested the priest's prayers for the people⁸⁶. Just as the smoke of incense rises when burned, so too do the prayers of the priest rise to God. God remained long-suffering. Korah and his followers were given a chance to reflect on their disobedience, yet they stubbornly persevered in their sin..

Korah and his gang arrived at the tabernacle the next morning. He called the people to come and see. The glory of the Lord appeared in a glimmer of light above the tabernacle. Moses called Dathan and Abiram because they had not arrived. Yet they refused to obey Moses and rebelled. The Lord wanted to destroy all the people and commanded Moses and Aaron that they should separate themselves from the people, but Moses and Aaron prayed fervently that the Lord would not punish all the people for the sin of a few singles. The Lord answered their prayers, but the guilty would still receive their deserved punishment.

Korah, Dathan and Abiram's punishment

God's judgment befell the guilty. The rest of the people had to remove them from the tents of the wicked men. Moses left the decision between who was right and who was wrong to God. If they died naturally, Moses was not sent by God, but should they die in an unnatural way, as in that the ground opened its mouth and swallowed them alive, they despised God and Moses was sent by God to lead the people.

Dathan and Abiram were still standing defiantly in front of their tents, when the ground beneath them split open. Dathan and Abiram, together with their families and all their possessions disappeared underground. God's wrath also befell Korah and his followers. While the people fled from the place where the earth had split open; Korah and his gang were burned by a fire of the Lord at the tabernacle. Korah's sons, however, are spared. Their descendants were the Korahites who later served as threshold keepers at the tabernacle⁸⁷.

86 Revelation 8: 3

"Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

87 1 Chronicles 9: 19

"Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, from his father's house, the Korahites, were in charge of the work of the service, [d]gatekeepers of the tabernacle. Their fathers had been keepers of the entrance to the camp of the Lord."

Centuries later, David appointed them to do the singing in the house of the Lord⁸⁸.

At the command of the Lord, Moses instructed Aaron's son Eleazar to collect all the fire pans of Korah's gang and smash the pans into thin plates. They used the plates as a covering for the burnt offering altar. From then on, it served as a warning to the people that no incompetent persons should appoint themselves priests.

The next day, the people accused Moses and Aaron of trying to kill their own people. As the people drew near, the glory of the Lord appeared over the tabernacle. God wanted to destroy all the people and spare only Moses and Aaron. Moses immediately sent Aaron to take his fire pan and offer incense as atonement for the people. However, the judgment of the Lord has already begun and people have already fallen to their death. While Aaron moved among the people with the incense offering, the Lord was merciful once again by stopping the plague, but more than 14,700 people had already died. Aaron interceded as high priest for his people; just as Christ interceded centuries later for all chosen sinners. Christ, the true High Priest, reconciled the sins of the people with his blood sacrifice⁸⁹.

The Budding of Aaron's Rod

The Lord instructed Moses to put twelve rods, one for each tribe, in the tabernacle. The next morning Aaron's rod was full of blossoms and almonds. They then put his staff in the ark, as a sign that he had been elected to the priesthood. The first tree to bloom in spring is the almond tree and the Hebrew word for almond tree means "watchful." God watched over his people. It also referred to the redemptive work of Christ, which gives new life to every believer.

88 1 Chronicles 6: 31

"Now these are the men whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after the ark came to rest."

89 Hebrews 2: 17

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

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11. Moses sins and Joshua becomes the successor

Numbers 20 up to Numbers 36

God continued with his work of redemption

God did not leave his people in their sinful state. All the events in the Old Testament are indicative of the redemptive work of Christ. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Only those who believe in Christ, with complete faith, will live.
- Balaam's blessing was a prophecy regarding the coming of Christ.
- Moses as mediator was indicative to Christ, the only true Mediator.

Moses's disobedience

After 38 years of wandering in the desert the Israelites came back to Kadesh. Their ancestors had to turn around there because they were too afraid to invade Canaan. God punished them and they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Except for Joshua and Caleb, no one older than 20 years was allowed to move into the promised land. They all died in the desert.

Once again at Meribah the people had no water to drink and complained to Moses and Aaron. With their attitude they taxed Moses's powers and tested him (as mediator). The Lord showed them mercy. Moses had to take his staff and together with Aaron, before the eyes of the people, Moses had to talk with a rock and the rock would then give them water, but Moses was impatient and irritated, for he argued with the people, and in his anger he struck the rock twice, without giving glory to the Lord. The Lord immediately brought forth water out of the rock for the people and the livestock, but as punishment Moses and Aaron could no longer lead the people into the promised land. They then named the place Meribah, which means "strife" because the people quarrelled there. With his actions, Moses tarnished the holiness of God. Moses did not act religiously, but took the bit between his own teeth. Without faith it is impossible to carry out God's will⁹⁰.

90 Hebrews 11: 6

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Moses sent messengers to Edom

Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom with the request that he would allow the Israelites to pass through his land. Moses promised Edom that Israel would not pass through fields or vineyards, but would strictly keep to the King's Road. The Kings Road was a very old road that stretched from Aqaba at the Red Sea to Syria.

The Edomites refused to let the Israelites pass through their land and thus they had to make a detour around Edom, as the Lord had expressly forbidden them to fight against Edom. The Lord gave Edom their land and Israel had to honour it. The Edomites, however, did not trust the peace and marched with many men to stop Israel. The Lord later punished Edom for always being hostile towards the Israelites⁹¹.

Death of Aaron

Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar (the son of Aaron) were instructed to ascend Mount Hor. Mount Hor lay on the border of Edom. Aaron died on the top of this mountain. At the behest of the Lord, Moses took off Aaron's garments and put them on for Eleazar. Eleazar was Aaron's legitimate successor as high priest. Aaron would not enter the Promised Land of Canaan because of his and Moses's sin.

The Bronze Serpent

The king of Arad (a city in southern Canaan) attacked the people and captured some of the Israelites. After making a vow to the Lord, the Israelites defeated the king of Arad and struck all their cities with the curse. That's why they called the place Hormah, which means, "banned."

Unable to pass through Edom, Israel then passed through the Arabah desert. They complained again and this time the Lord sent poisonous snakes into them. These snakes pecked many Israelites and many died. They repented of their unbelief and asked Moses to pray to the Lord. Moses prayed to the Lord to take away the snakes, and the Lord answered Moses's prayer in a special way.

91 Amos 1: 11

"Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, And cast off all pity; His anger tore perpetually, And he kept his wrath forever.'"

Moses was instructed by God to make a serpent out of brass and put the brass serpent on a pole. An Israelite, pecked by a venomous snake, had to look up at the brass snake and then he would be healed. Thus the brass serpent became a reference to the crucified Jesus Christ for believers must also look up to the exalted Jesus Christ to gain eternal life through Him⁹².

Sihon and Og

Israel, after turning away from Edom, came to the brook Zered (on the south of the Dead Sea). Their messengers asked Sihon, king of the Amorites, permission to pass through his country. They promised the Amorites that they would do no harm, but Sihon refused.

Israel did not move away and Sihon readied his troops to fight against Israel. The battle took place at the city of Jahaz in Moab. Israel defeated the army of Sihon and struck its cities with the ban curse. The people then lived in the conquered cities of the Amorites.

The same fate also befell Og, the king of Bashan. Him and his men went to war against Israel but lost. The victory over Sihon and Og gave assurances to the people that the Lord was with them and that they would take the promised land.

Balak sends for Balaam

The Israelites took up residence in the area east of the Jordan River after the victories over Sihon and Og. Their camp stood in the plains of Moab, north of the Arnon River, where they made preparations to conquer Canaan.

Balak, the king of the Moabites, feared that the Israelites would attack his land and made plans to defeat Israel. He did not know that the Lord forbade Israel to attack Moab, since the Moabites were the descendants of Lot⁹³. Hence Israel circled Moab and did not attack them. Convinced that the Israelites would systematically annihilate all of them in that region, Balak, the Moabite king, negotiated with the Midianites to join them in fighting against

92 John 3: 14-15

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should [a]not perish but have eternal life.”

93 Deuteronomy 2: 9

“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’”

the Israelites. However, the Midianites was not up to a fight with the Israelites, and Balak then made another plan.

There lived a “prophet” in northern Mesopotamia and his name was Balaam. He was familiar with all the miracles God had done for Israel and realized that the gentile nations were in awe of God. He therefore pretended that he also served God and that he could also perform miracles, thus he created a great income for himself in this way.

Balak sent messengers to Balaam with the request that he curse Israel, because Balak was under the impression that Israel could be expelled more easily if they were cursed by Balaam. Balak undertook to pay Balaam a large sum of money for it. The Lord warned Balaam not to go. Balak sent even more messengers to Balaam and was even willing to pay any compensation he demanded. The Lord allowed Balaam to go, but only if he did what the Lord commanded him to do.

The next morning Balaam went with the princes of Moab. God became angry with Balaam, and He sent the Angel of the Lord to stand in the way of Balaam’s donkey. Balaam struck his donkey, but his donkey stood still because the beast had seen the Angel of the Lord in the way. When Balaam hit his donkey for a third time, the donkey asked Balaam why he is beating him. The Lord opened Balaam’s eyes so that he could also see the Angel, and immediately he fell down before Him. Balaam wanted to turn around, but the Angel of the Lord commanded him to go with the men to Balak. He had to go and say what the Lord commanded him to say.

Balaam blessed the people

Balaam told Balak on arrival that he could only say what the Lord commanded him to say. Balak was confident that Balaam would curse the Israelites. Balak, at Balaam’s request, built seven altars and sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. The purpose of the sacrifices was to initiate God positively toward Balak. Balaam stood looking from a distance at the Israelites at the bottom of the plains. He blessed the Israelites every time he came to Balak, instead of cursing them, as Balak had requested him to do.

Balak was so despondent and angry that he chased Balaam away without any payment. Balaam, before leaving, uttered a remarkable prophecy. He saw that in the future peoples would rise up and go down, but a star from Jacob and a sceptre from Israel would rule over all, over all who wanted to

go to war. Balaam referred to the coming of Christ who would rule the whole world as King⁹⁴. The Lord used the pagan prophet to proclaim the coming of the Messiah to the Gentiles.

Israel fell into idolatry at Shittim

Balaam received no payment from Balak because he did not curse the Israelites, but he counselled Balak to seduce Israel into sin and idolatry. The Moabites were suddenly much kinder to the Israelites. They invited the Israelites to attend their feasts at Shittim. The Israelites accepted the invitation and participated in the feasts honouring Baal of Peor, the Moabite idol. They then began to marry each other as well. Balaam's actions in seducing the people into idolatry were an abomination in God's eyes⁹⁵.

God punished the people with a plague, and 24,000 Israelites died. Zimri, from the tribe of Simeon, took a Midianite woman named Cozbi to his tent as the plague continued. This happened right after Moses had commanded all the men who participated in the veneration of Baal of Peor, to be hanged so the plague could stop.

Phinehas, the son of high priest Eleazar, then stabbed Zimri and Cozbi to death with his sword. He thereby atoned for the people's sin, and the Lord caused the plague to cease. The Lord promised Phinehas that from then on, the high priest would always come from his generation.

God severely punished the Midianites. Moses, by order of the Lord, sent out an army of 12,000 men to fight them and every Midianite they encountered were killed. They defeated the Midianites and killed all the men and women who sinned. The Israelites also captured and killed Balaam. The Lord avenged Himself on the Midianites. They were guilty of covenant breaking by deliberately turning the people away from God.

Moses's farewell

The Israelites were getting ready to conquer the promised land. Moses could

94 Revelation 22: 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

95 Revelation 2: 14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

not enter Canaan because of his disobedience at Meribah. The Lord told him that he would die after the Midianites were punished. Moses pleaded with God to allow him to enter Canaan, but God became angry and rejected his request.

Moses read the laws of the Lord to the people one last time. It is recorded in the book Of Deuteronomy. *Deuteronomy* means “repetition of the law or the second law.” He further arranged what they all had to do in Canaan and how they were to divide the land amongst the tribes. His message to the people was they were to love God and obey Him, they had to keep His commandments and then they would be fine. He also gave a brief historical overview of their period in the desert so that the people could realize that God had guided and protected them.

Joshua Moses’s successor

At God’s command, Moses transferred leadership to Joshua. This happened before Eleazar, the high priest, and the people. Moses laid his hands on Joshua as a sign that he had been chosen by the Lord as leader. Thereafter he again gave laws to the people in connection with the daily sacrifices, the sacrifices on the Sabbath, and instructions for major religious festivals and rules relating to the vows made by women.

At the command of the Lord, Moses led the Israelites in a war of vengeance against the Midianites. For the tribes of Reuben and Gad, he designated the territory they were to receive east of the Jordan. The other tribes would be west of the Jordan, once they have taken possession of the land.

Moses also, on command of the Lord, made a list of all the places where the Israelites camped during their journey through the wilderness. He then received a description of where the borders of the land of Canaan would be, as well as the names of the cities assigned to the Levites and the names of the six free cities. He then also forbade the daughters of the people to marry any pagans.

Death and burial of Moses

Moses, at God’s command, ascended Mount Nebo, from where the Lord showed him the land of Canaan. Moses died there and he was buried by God Himself in an unknown place. In the Bible we read that the devil and

Michael the archangel were fighting over his body⁹⁶. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eyes did not weaken and his body strength did not decrease. The Israelites mourned his death for 30 days.

The significance of Moses

Moses was a special figure in the Bible. He was the baby whose mother hid him in a basket in the Nile River. The son raised in the luxury of Egypt by the daughter of Pharaoh and a man who was a shepherd for forty years in Midian. The shepherd who was commissioned by God by means of a burning bush to lead his people out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. The man who, along with his brother, asked the king of Egypt, to let the Israelites go and then, at God's command, announced the Ten Plagues upon Egypt. He was the leader who led his people in the wilderness for 40 years, and who communicated the Ten Commandments of God to them.

Moses, the mediator between God and the people, was indicative to Christ. Christ, the Mediator between God and us, sinners⁹⁷. God spoke to Moses and made His will known to him. For example, in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus referred to Moses and the prophets as those through whom God made His will known⁹⁸. We read in the gospels that Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke to Him⁹⁹. Moses was undoubtedly a prophet who performed daunting deeds¹⁰⁰. He was an ordinary person who lived close to God, so God used him in a powerful way.

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| 96 | Judas 1: 9 | “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” |
| 97 | Hebrews 9: 15 | “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” |
| 98 | Luke 16: 31 | “But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’” |
| 99 | Matthew 17: 3 | “And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.” |
| 100 | Deuteronomy 34: 10-12 | “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.” |

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12. The entry into Canaan

Joshua 1 up to Joshua 11

God remembered His promise

God's promise to the patriarchs was fulfilled. God gave His people a place where they could live and serve him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God promised His people that He would bless them, but at the same time they had to be faithful and obedient to Him.
- The Lord didn't choose just Israelites to belong to Him and His church.
- God does not allow disobedience to go unpunished.

God's commission to Joshua

Joshua received the command of the Lord to move with the people through the Jordan, to the land that God had promised them, after the death of Moses. Every place they stepped on would become their property. The country's borders would stretch from Lebanon and the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. During the reign of Solomon, the territory of Israel indeed stretched that far.¹⁰¹

The people were ready to occupy Canaan. The Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, preferred to stay east of the Jordan, but they first had to help the other tribes conquer the Western region of Jordan. They promised to be obedient and disciplined and those who resisted were killed. The people completely trusted in the Lord and they looked forward to conquer the land of Canaan.

The area across the Jordan was very fertile, but the Canaanites were well-trained soldiers and they very solidly barricaded their cities. Joshua realized they couldn't conquer the cities without God's help and thus he prayed to God for help and assistance. During that time the people lived according to God's commandments and they had reintroduced religious customs and festivals which fell into disuse as result of their wanderings in the desert, for

101 1 Kings 4: 21

"So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life."

example the Passover.

Rahab hides two spies

Joshua sent out two scouts or spies to explore the land. They crossed the Jordan and arrived in Jericho. Jericho was a city that lay on the western side of the Jordan Valley. However, the king of Jericho soon found out about their presence and immediately sent soldiers to capture them. Rahab, a prostitute, helped the two spies by hiding them on her roof, under the stalks of flax. She led the soldiers up the garden path and pulled wool over their eyes, thus she saved the lives of the spies. The spies learned from her that the inhabitants of Jericho were very afraid of the Israelites. The spies saw the hand of the Lord in the encounter with Rahab and this picked their spirits up. They were convinced that the Israelites would definitely conquer Jericho.

Rahab was an exceptional woman. She heard about God's miracles like the rest of the citizens and she knew that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Red Sea; that He had given the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, into the hands of the people of Israel. However, while the other inhabitants were in fear, she bowed before the God of Israel. God used her as a tool to rescue the spies from the hand of the king. She thereby shared in the victory of Israel. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, she is mentioned as one of the believers¹⁰². James praised her works¹⁰³ and Matthew mentioned her name in the genealogy of Jesus Christ¹⁰⁴. It is remarkable that two of the four women referred to in Jesus's genealogy were women of pagan descent.

Rahab was so sure that God would give Jericho into Israel's power that she asked the spies to think of her, just like she thought of them when they were in need. The spies promised to spare her and her family when they invaded the city, and as a sign of the agreement, Rahab tied the red twisted line, with which she had the scouts descending over the city wall, to her window. The scouts returned safely to Joshua, telling them that the inhabitants of Canaan were terrified of the Israelites. Joshua was convinced the Lord would give Canaan into Israel's hand.

102 Hebrews 11: 31

"By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace."

103 James 2: 25

"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"

104 Matthew 1: 5

"Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse,"

Israel crosses the Jordan

The people were ready to cross the Jordan River, and when the feet of the priests who walked in front and carried the ark touched the water, the water moved away so that the Israelites could walk through without getting their feet wet. The priests remained standing in the middle of the Jordan, until all the people passed through.

The Lord commissioned Joshua to erect two memorials of twelve stones each. The memorial on the opposite side of the Jordan had to be built of twelve stones, which they picked up in the middle of the Jordan. The twelve stones represented the twelve tribes. The second monument was to be built in the Jordan, on the spot where the priests stood with the ark. The memorials were to remind their descendants that the Lord performed a miracle there, by letting the people pass through the Jordan River with dry feet.

After 40 years of wandering through the wilderness, the people were finally in the land that God had promised their forefathers with an oath. God was faithful, he kept his promises.

The commander of the army of the Lord

The Israelites camped at Gilgal, the first place in Canaan. God appeared to Joshua and told him exactly how the Israelites were to conquer the promised land. In this apparition, it is clear that God would defeat the Canaanites and that Israel was only an instrument that God used to annihilate the gentiles.

Jericho was the first city they had to conquer. Joshua knew from the report he received from the spies that the inhabitants of Jericho were well armed and that the city was surrounded by a massive wall. The Israelites did not have the necessary weaponry for this battle.

Joshua was still contemplating his war strategy when suddenly a man with a sword in his hand stood before him. Joshua didn't know him and asked if he was friend or foe and the man introduced Himself as the commander of the army of the Lord. He instructed Joshua to remove his shoes because the place where he stood was holy. Joshua then received his war strategy from God. Joshua fell reverently with his face to the ground.

The Lord commanded Joshua that Jericho and with all that was in it, had to be burned for it had to be a burnt offering, a sacrifice to the Lord. The Lord wanted the first city that the Israelites conquered in Canaan, to be sacrificed

to Him as a first fruits sacrifice of the whole land.

This first fruits sacrifice points to Christ who was the real true sacrifice¹⁰⁵. Everything that lived in the city, both human and animal, had to be put to death. The silver, gold, copper and iron objects had to be added to the treasure of the Lord so that it could be sanctified and set apart for Him.

The fall of Jericho

God's command was very simple, and Joshua carried it out exactly according to the instructions he received from God. The Israelites had to walk around the city once every day, for six days. The warriors walked in front, followed by seven priests blowing on ram's horns, followed by the bearers with the ark and finally the rest of the people. On the seventh day the people had to have walked around Jericho seven times and then they had to cheer and shout at Joshua's command. The inhabitants of Jericho witnessed the procession from their high city walls every day. They were surprised and curious at first, but later they mocked the Israelites. Great was their surprise when, on the seventh day, the people walked around the city seven times.

The Israelites cheered and shouted at Joshua's command and the walls of Jericho crumbled and collapsed. The mocking inhabitants lay buried under the rubble of the city, Jericho. Those who were still alive were killed. Only Rahab and her family were saved because she helped the spies when they were in need. The gold, silver, copper and iron objects of the spoils were brought to the tabernacle in order to sanctify it for the Lord. Joshua made the people promise that they would never try to rebuild Jericho for the person who does try to rebuild the city would do that at the expense of his own children. During the time of King Ahab, Hiel rebuilt the city and two of his sons died as a result¹⁰⁶.

Defeat at Ai

Joshua sent scouts to explore the city of Ai. The city lay northwest of Jericho and was a small ruinous city, not at all as strong as Jericho. The scouts

105 1 Corinthians 15: 22-23 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

106 1 Kings 16: 34 "In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun."

returned with the news that only 3,000 men were needed to overrun the little town. The men left for Ai, but against all expectation, they were defeated! Joshua was very disappointed and did not understand what the cause of this defeat was. God explained to him that someone of the people had sinned.

At the command of the Lord, Joshua cast a lot to identify the culprit and fate fell on Achan. In his tent they found a cloak, as well as gold and silver, which he buried. He didn't heed God's explicit command to take nothing from Jericho. Achan and his family were stoned to death and afterwards the people packed a pile of stones on them and everything they owned.

The Israelites attacked Ai again. A division of soldiers went undetected behind Ai, while the rest, led by Joshua, launched a mock attack on the city. The group of soldiers who attacked the city fled and while fleeing, the other division invaded the city from behind, destroying it with fire. They then pursued and killed the soldiers of Ai and took possession of the city of Ai.

The Lord kept his promise to Israel that they would conquer the promised land. He again made it clear that when they sin, He would not leave it unpunished. His justice demands punishment for sin.

Joshua renews the covenant on Mount Ebal

After they conquered Ai, the Israelites moved north to Mount Ebal to bring sacrifices to the Lord. They built an altar from uncut stones and offered burnt and thanksgiving offerings to God. Joshua then wrote the law of God on the stones and read it to the people. God would bless them if they kept His commandments and followed His instructions. One very important command was that they had to annihilate all the Canaanites.

Guile of the Gibeonites

In the south of the region of Canaan, five kings joined forces to fight Israel but the inhabitants of Gibeon did not form part of this agreement because they had no king. They did hear what Joshua had done with Jericho and with Ai, and they cunningly decided to make a deal with the Israelites. They moved to Joshua with torn clothes, worn shoes, old broken wine bags and all their food for provision were dried-out and crumbled. They lied and convinced Joshua that they had travelled very far to make a covenant with him. Joshua didn't realize that Gibeon was part of Canaan, just west of Jericho.

Joshua, without consulting God, made a covenant with them and undertook not to attack them. This treaty that Joshua made with them went directly against God's command to annihilate all the Canaanites, and three days later, Joshua found out that the people of Gibeon had deceived him. He was very angry, but he could not break the covenant, since it was confirmed with an oath but as a result of their cunningness, he ordered the Gibeonites to be woodcutters and water bearers for the priests and for the people.

Saul later broke the covenant with the Gibeonites by killing them¹⁰⁷.

Subjugation of South Canaan

The Gibeonites sent a message to Joshua, that the five kings of the south had heard of the covenant and were heading with a great army to Gibeon. Joshua immediately turned around and unexpectedly attacked the enemy the next day. Confusion and chaos reigned amongst the enemy and they fled. God dropped huge hailstones on them and many of them were killed by the hail. Some of the enemy had fled so far that Joshua was worried he wouldn't be able to catch up with them before the sun set. God, at Joshua's request, made the sun and moon stand still so that Israel would have enough time to pursue and defeat the enemy. God is so powerful that He controls the sun and moon¹⁰⁸. The Bible says that never was there a day like that.

Joshua captured several cities such as Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron and Debir after the victory. All those cities were hit with the banned curse. The Lord, the God of Israel, fought for his people. Joshua and his men then returned to the camp at Gilgal.

Israel also subjugated Northern Canaan

The kings of the northern territories also made a covenant with each other to fight together against Israel. They marched against Israel under king Hazor's command and the battle took place at Merom. King Hazor soon realized that they were losing and took to flight. Joshua drew level with king Hazor's army and conquered them. God fulfilled his promise.

107 2 Samuel 21: 1

"Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, "It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites."

108 Job 9: 7

"He commands the sun, and it does not rise; He seals off the stars;"

The land was still full of Canaanites, but each tribe was then instructed to exterminate the gentiles in their own territory. The struggle continued after the death of Joshua. The tribe of Judah must have conquered its territory even further¹⁰⁹. Unfortunately, Israel was disobedient time and again, and thus the Lord decided to leave some of the gentile nations in order to test Israel and to find out whether or not they would obey Him¹¹⁰.

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109 Judges 1: 1-2

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, “Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?” And the Lord said, “Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.”

110 Judges 2: 20-22

“Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the Lord, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not.”

13. Joshua's last counsels and his death

Joshua 11 up to Joshua 24; Judges 1 and Judges 17 up to Judges 21

God gave Israel a special place.

The Lord gave every tribe a place to live. The territory each tribe received had to be dedicated to Him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- The Lord set His people apart to live holy lives.
- True religion is complete obedience to God.
- The Lord has always detested idolatry and He punishes the guilty.

The distribution of Canaan at Gilgal

The land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of Israel on two occasions, with the first time being at Gilgal and the second time at Shiloh. Joshua, the high priest Eleazar, and the elders of the people first gathered at Gilgal to divide the land. They did it by casting lots.

The division of the area east of the Jordan did not create any problems. Moses had already divided the area between Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh before his death because they were cattle ranchers and this region provided good grazing. However, they still had to go and help the other tribes conquer the rest of Canaan before they could start farming.

It was the tribe of Judah's turn and they got the area west from the Dead Sea up to the Mediterranean Sea. Ephraim acquired the area further north, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The mountainous section just north of Ephraim was given to the other half of Manasseh. They complained to Joshua because the land they were given was not suitable for farming. Joshua advised them to drive out the Canaanites who lived in the mountains and ravines and cut out the bushes in order to gain more land.

The distribution of Canaan at Shiloh

The first five tribes had already received their territory at that time. The division of the rest of the country took place in Shiloh. Joshua sent out scouts to explore the area that had yet to be divided. After receiving feedback from

the scouts, the remaining tribes also got their territories. The land of Canaan was divided as follows: Benjamin received the territory along the Jordan, between Judah and Ephraim. South of Judah to the Mediterranean Sea was the land that Simeon received. After the lot was cast again, the territory southeast of Phoenicia was given to the tribe of Zebulun. The area between Zebulun, Manasseh and the Jordan was given to Issachar. The tribe of Asher took possession of the area north of Zebulun and east of Phoenicia. Naphtali received the region between Asher and Zebulun in the west and the Jordan in the east. The land left between Ephraim, Benjamin, Judah, and the Mediterranean was given to Dan. The land was divided between eleven tribes of Israel and every tribe was instructed to annihilate the remaining Canaanites in its territory.

The Levites received no territory because they had to devote their lives to the work of the Lord and therefore needed no land to cultivate¹¹¹. God himself was their hereditary portion. They did receive 48 cities and the people had to pay tithes to them to provide for their livelihood.

Further division

There were three free cities on either side of the Jordan. If a person accidentally killed someone, he could flee to one of those free cities and the deceased's family could not, should they be out for blood vengeance, kill him if he found himself in one of the free cities. When the high priest died, the person could return to his city or village without fear that the deceased's family would avenge them on him.

God also gave two exceptional believers their own land. The first one was Caleb, who as a scout maintained that the Israelites should conquer the land of Canaan as the Lord had said. He received a plot of land with many springs on it from Hebron in Judah. The second person was Joshua, the other scout who voted with Caleb that the Israelites could conquer the land of Canaan with the help of God. He received the city of Timnath-Serah in Ephraim, where he lived until his death.

111 Numbers 18: 23

“But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”

An altar was build by Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh retreated to their own territory after the division of the land Canaan. They took the spoils Joshua divided among all the tribes, with them. East of the Jordan, they built an altar as a memorial to their descendants.

The rest of the Israelites were very upset by this because no one was allowed to set up an altar in a place other than at the tabernacle. The family leaders from each tribe of Israel went to Gilead to discuss the matter. They accused the three tribes of becoming unfaithful and disloyal to the Lord. They feared that the sin of these three tribes would anger God and that He would punish them all.

The men of the three tribes stated emphatically that this was not their intention. This was done precisely because they were worried that their seclusion would alienate them from the other tribes. They further explained that the tribes west of the Jordan might even view them as a group that had no part in the Lord. To prevent the tribes east of the Jordan from becoming disloyal and unfaithful to the Lord, they built the altar. They did not build the altar to sacrifice, but to remind them that the Lord is their God.

The tribes west of the Jordan were satisfied with this answer. All Israel served the Lord in harmony.

Joshua's last days

After some time has passed Joshua called all Israel together and addressed them. He was dying and warned the people that they must do all and everything, which was written in the Book of the Law of Moses. They were to love the Lord their God and not mix with the pagan nations that lived with them. If they did, those nations would become a big problem for Israel.

He then reminded the people of God's goodness and urged them to devote themselves communally and individually to the service of the Lord. The people solemnly promised it then.

Joshua died at the age of 110 years. He was buried on the ground that the Lord had given him. Joshua was indicative to Jesus Christ, for Joshua's name, just like Jesus's name, indicated "salvation." Joshua delivered Israel from their wandering in the wilderness by leading them into the Promised Land just as

Jesus led those who believe in Him, out of the wilderness of their sin, through His death on the cross, into eternal life¹¹².

The struggle continues

The Israelites continued with the struggle to possess the Promised Land fully after Joshua died. At first it went well, because the people remembered the instructions Joshua had given them and they served the Lord. Israel had no king or emperor like the other nations. Nor did they need an earthly leader, for God guided them as long as they served him and kept his commandments.

However, they became disloyal and unfaithful over time and they each did what was right in their own eyes. They no longer exterminated all the Canaanites, as God had commanded. Some of the tribes submitted the Canaanites to them and thus collected taxes by which they enriched themselves. The Canaanites still lived together in strong groups in some parts of Canaan, and the Israelites were too terrified to attack them.

Due to their cowardice and self-will, the Israelites did not fulfil God's command but fell into sin. They began to worship the pagan idols. The figurines of the pagans were something tangible and very attractive to worship and over time, many Israelites put pagan idol figurines in their homes. They later also started to participate in public ceremonies which would honour the pagan idols. What Joshua warned the people against, had happened! The people mingled with the gentiles and they were no longer obedient to the Lord.

Micah's idolatry

The history of Micah is a telling example of the idolatry into which the people fell. Micah was from the mountains of Ephraim.

His mother pronounced a curse on the person who stole her money. Micah, who was the thief, was afraid that the curse would hit him and so he soon repaid the stolen money. His mother then took 200 shekels of silver from that money and requested Micah to build an idol statue with it. He then also set aside a room in his house for the idolatry and ordained his son as priest. However, the religious activity increased to such an extent that Micah later

112 Ephesians 2: 15-16

“having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

ordained a Levite who was passing by, as a priest.

One day, five spies from Dan showed up. They were looking for a place where they could live, for they had not driven the Canaanites from the piece of land assigned to them. The result was that they were the ones who had to move, and now they were jealous of the other tribe's fertile land, large cattle herds, and even of their idols. There was a great possibility that the tribes would split up if God did not sometimes drive them to each other with His punishment of them.

The spies stayed with Micah and were utterly impressed with his wealth and idolatry. They returned to Dan and told their tribesmen about Micah's wealth. They then invaded Ephraim with an army of 600 Danites. The five spies went into Micah's house and they took his idols, as well as the Levite who had to act as priest for the Danites, with them.

They then moved further north as far as Laish. This territory was fertile and they managed without much difficulty to annihilate the people who lived in that area. They changed the name of the city to their ancestor Dan and established their own sanctuary there.

Gibeah's Crime

The Israelites and Canaanites lived in the same area and had much to do with each other. They visited with each other and they started marrying each other as well.

In Judges 19 and 20 we read the story of a Levite from Ephraim who was married to a girl from Bethlehem. However, she was unfaithful and went back to her parents' home. The Levite went to her after four months to bring her back to his house; she agreed, and on the way back they spent the night in Gibeah, a town in the territory of Benjamin. The inhabitants of Gibeah surrounded that house and demanded that the Levite come out so that they could have intercourse with him. They had the same sexual inclination as the men of Sodom¹¹³. Such actions were characteristic of persons who did

113 Genesis 19: 5

"And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

not obey God but lived out their own desires¹¹⁴. The person with whom the Levite was staying did not want to expose his guest to such a shameful act. He suggested that the men take his daughter and the Levite's concubine, but this did not satisfy them. Then the Levite sent out his concubine to the men. That night the men of Gibeah assaulted the woman in such a way that she passed away. The Levite found her in front of his host's house the next morning.

The Levite did not seem to be very worried about his concubine, for he ordered her to get up so that they could travel further. When she didn't answer, he noticed she was dead and he loaded her body onto his donkey and left.

The consequences of the events in Gibeah

The Levite was so angry about what happened in Gibeah that he chopped up his concubine's body into twelve pieces and sent the pieces across the land to all the tribes of Israel. All the Israelites were shocked at what the men of Gibeah had done and decided to punish them. With an army of 400,000 men, Israel marched against Benjamin. They requested the Benjaminites to extradite the evildoers to them, but the Benjaminites refused. The tribe of Benjamin assembled an army of 26,000 men, of which 700 of those men were excellent slingshots.

The Israelites suffered two defeats in the battles that followed. They were disheartened and saddened by the events. Therefore, they decided to bring a sacrifice to the Lord in Bethel and ask Him what they should do. The Lord gave the people an encouraging answer. Israel had to fight Benjamin again. They set up ambushes for the Benjaminites, thereby cutting them off from their city. The Lord delivered Benjamin into the hand of Israel and almost all the men of Benjamin were killed.

Six hundred men fled to the desert in an attempt to save their lives. The Israelites also exterminated the wives and children of Benjamin. The rest of the people swore at Mizpah that no one would give their daughters to a

114 Romans 1: 26-27

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”

Benjaminite as a wife and thus the 600 men who escaped were the only Benjaminites who remained. In this way one tribe is exterminated almost entirely from Israel.

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14. Othniel up to Gideon

Judges 1 up to Judges 10

God is patient

Time and again Israel sinned in the eyes of the Lord. They forgot the service of the Lord and worshipped the idols of the longstanding inhabitants of Canaan. God punished them by letting the pagan nations rule over them, but when Israel, fell in hardship and misery, they turned to the Lord again, and then the Lord called a judge to deliver them. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God chastised His people for the sins they had committed, and thus the purpose of the discipline was to lead His people back to Him again.
- God was gracious every time His people repented and turned back to Him.
- God delivered His people from their difficult circumstances..

Time of Judges

Israel lived in the Promised Land. The Lord was their King. The people served the Lord while Joshua was still alive. After his death and the death of those who witnessed God's great deeds, the people become unfaithful to the Lord. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes and the Lord and His laws were no longer important to them.

The Israelites did not exterminate all the Canaanites as the Lord had commanded them, but rather lived with the Canaanites. The Canaanites were gentiles who served all kinds of idols. Many Israelites married Canaanite women and adopted their pagan customs and even pagan beliefs. The people no longer served the Lord alone, but violated the law of God, which forbade them to serve any other gods besides Him¹¹⁵.

The Lord didn't leave His people for their disobedience, but He punished them for their idolatry. He sent other peoples such as the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites to oppress them. When the people realized their sin and turned to Him, He sent a judge to deliver them from their difficult circumstances.

Sadly, they soon forgot how the Lord had delivered them and simply fell back into sin.

115 Exodus 20: 3

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

This cycle continued for 450 years¹¹⁶ and consisted in the people's disobedience, followed by God's chastisement where after remorse and repentance followed; then God would appoint a judge to deliver them. Yet the people always turned away from the Lord.

The word judge denotes a person who "provides justice where there is injustice." God used the judges as instruments to give justice to his people by delivering them from their enemies. Again and again the judges had to lead the people back to Him.

The Judges

The great judges were like national heroes who each time delivered the people from an oppressor, people like Othniel, Ehud, and Barak along with Deborah (the prophetess), Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. There were also six "smaller" judges, namely Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.

Othniel

The Israelites fell into sin after Joshua and the elders's death. The Angel of the Lord appeared to them at Bochim and pointed out to them that the Lord protected and kept them, but that they disobeyed Him. The people initially felt very bad about their sins, but unfortunately they did not repent.

The Israelites fell into idolatry to such an extent that God punished them. Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, moved to Canaan and invaded the country. He defeated the Israelites without difficulty because God had not helped them in the war. King Cushan-Rishathaim oppressed the Israelites for eight years. The people were in great need, crying out to God for help.

God listened to their cry for help and sent Othniel to deliver them. He was the son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb and called upon the people to rebel against King Cushan-Rishathaim. The people soon managed to expel the foreign king from the country with his army. After this, a period of peace came for Israel it went very well for 40 years.

116 Acts 13: 20

"After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

Ehud

With the course of time the Israelites began to live licentiously again. They first served the pagan idols in secret, but later openly attended pagan ceremonies. They were disloyal and God had to bring them back to order. The Lord sent King Eglon of Moab to wage a war against the Israelites. Eglon easily defeated them and took up residence in Jericho. The city has since been rebuilt, but without the walls of earlier times. (At the time Joshua made the people promise that they would never rebuild Jericho, because the person who did that would do it at the expense of his own children.)

The Israelites paid taxes to Eglon in Jericho for eighteen years. The burden became too heavy for the Israelites, and they turned to God and begged Him for mercy. God listened to their pleas and appointed Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjaminite as judge. Ehud was instructed to pay the Benjaminites' taxes to the king. He was left-handed and carried his sword on the right side of his body under his clothes. The king's guards searched only his left side and did not find his sword. Ehud paid the king the tax money. King Eglon of Moab was very fat. After giving the tax to the king, Ehud sent the people who carried the tax money back. He turned around at the statues near Gilgal. He went back to the fat king and told him, "King, I need to tell you something, but it's a secret." The king sent everyone out, and when they were alone, he stabbed the king to death with his sword.

Then Ehud went to Ephraim and blew on the ram's horn to summon the people for war. He was sure that the Lord would help them to defeat the Moabites. He sent men to occupy the passageways at the river of Jordan so that the Moabites could not flee. The Israelites defeated the Moabites and then 80 years of peace followed.

Shamgar

The Philistines invaded Canaan from the west side and wreaked havoc, killing many people. The people humbled themselves before God and the Lord sent Shamgar to deliver the people. He took a stick, one with which one drives oxen, and beat more than 600 Philistines to death with it. The other Philistines were so startled that they fled back to their own land. Shamgar is not usually referred to as a judge because the Bible does not specifically state that he was conceived by God as a saviour. Nor does it say that he directed Israel, but only that he delivered them.

Barak and Deborah

After Ehud's death the people served idols again. God punished them by using Jabin, king of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor, to oppress them and he waged a reign of terror with 900 chariots led by Sisera, his army commander. The enemy was very cruel, and the Israelites were nowhere safe.

Israel again turned to the Lord and He saved them by sending the prophetess Deborah. The Lord ordered Deborah to tell Barak to gather an army of 10,000 men on Mount Carmel. The Lord would deliver the army of Sisera into his hand but Barak was very afraid and he insisted that Deborah go with them.

When Barak and his chosen men came into the plain, the Lord disposed of it in such a way that a great rain and hailstorm fell on the plain and this meant that Sisera's chariots got stuck in the mud and Barak could then easily defeat them. Sisera fled on foot and sought refuge in the tent of a woman named Jael. Jael was Heber's wife, and while Sisera slept, Jael smashed a tent peg through his head and he died. After the victory, Deborah sang a paean. The Lord fights for Israel, but Israel must fight for the LORD. Then there was peace for forty years.

Gideon's calling

Israel began serving idols again. The Lord sent the Midianites to oppress them for seven years. Every year at harvest time, their soldiers came and took all the Israelites' grain for themselves. They also robbed the livestock of the Israelites. The people prayed to the Lord for help and He sent a prophet to point out their sin. Then the Lord sent Gideon to deliver them.

Gideon was the son of Joash, a man from the little city of Ophrah in the region of Manasseh. One day Gideon was secretly threshing wheat in a parchent. He threshed the wheat there because he was afraid of the Midianites. These were dangerous times and he didn't want everyone to see that he was threshing grain. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him and greeted him with the words: "The Lord is with you, valiant hero!"

Gideon was surprised at the Angel of the Lord and then Gideon asked Him why He was greeting him in this way. The Angel replied that the Lord was calling him to deliver his people. Gideon asked for a sign as proof that it was true. He prepared a meal of meat and unleavened bread for the Angel, which he placed on a flat stone. The Angel touched the food with the tip of his staff and it caught fire, which consumed everything. Gideon built an altar there

and called it, "The Lord is peace."

Gideon began to act

One night Gideon, on command of the Lord, overturned the altar of Baal, which belonged to his father. He also cut a sacred grove of Ashtoreth, the goddess of fertility, into pieces. He then slaughtered a bull and offered it to the Lord. When the inhabitants of Ophrah saw it the next morning they wanted to kill him. Yet his father, Joash, would not deliver him to them. He told them that Baal had to fight for himself, if he was a god.

Gideon, by order of the Lord, gathered an army of 32,000 men to fight the Midianite army of 135,000 men. He asked for another sign from the Lord. He placed a piece of sheep fleece on the threshing floor and asked the Lord to let it dew on the piece of fleece alone and not on the ground around the skin. It happened exactly as he asked. However, he wanted to make sure and asked for another sign. This time the piece of woollen fleece had to remain dry and the ground had to be wet from the dew. The Lord was patient with Gideon and made it happen that way. Thereafter Gideon was sure that the Lord would deliver Israel.

Yet the Lord first wanted to test Gideon on whether he trusted in Him at all and therefore Gideon had to send all the men home who were too terrified to fight. Only 10,000 men remained. After that, the remaining men had to drink water. Three hundred men scooped up the water with their hands, while the others knelt on their knees to drink. Only those 300 men who scooped the water with their hands were allowed to stay with Gideon. He sent the rest home. God wanted to show His people that it would be Him alone who delivered them from the power of the Midianites.

Gideon's valiant three hundred

Gideon set out with his 300 men to attack the Midianite army. That night Gideon and his weapon bearer sneaked up to the camp of the Midianites. There he listened to one soldier who told another about the dream he had of a large barley loaf rolling over the tent. The other soldier replied that this indicated that Gideon would defeat them.

That was when Gideon was sure that the Lord was with him. He divided the men into three groups, around the Midianites' camp, and gave them torches, which they had to put in pitchers. He then gave the sign. The 300

men simultaneously blew on their ram's horns and broke their pitchers. They pounced on the Midianites, shouting: "To the Lord and to Gideon!" The Midianites thought it was a large army rushing down on them and they panicked. In the dark, they attacked and killed each other. The survivors fled to the Jordan River where the other Israelites drew level with them and defeated them.

The people then asked Gideon to become their king, but he refused, because the Lord was their King. Gideon, however, took a gold ring from each of them from the spoils and made a golden ephod (shoulder garment) of it. Only a high priest may wear an ephod and he was not a high priest. Thus he sinned. Gideon placed it in the city of Ophrah. The Israelites later began worshipping the shroud. This was sin in the eyes of the Lord because He explicitly forbids the worship of images in His law¹¹⁷. For the next 40 years there was peace in Canaan.

Gideon's son Abimelech

Gideon had many sons, one of them was Abimelech whose mother was a Canaanite woman, and he thought that both the Israelites and the Canaanites liked him. He convinced them to crown him as their king. A gang helped him murder 70 of his brothers, only the youngest brother, Jotham, escaped. Jotham warned the Israelites against Abimelech and foretold his downfall.

Abimelech's reign was known for its many ructions and bloodshed. He even had a group of people burned in a basement. Soon after this event, he and his men stormed a tower to invade it, but then a woman, threw a millstone on his head from above, which crushed his skull. Abimelech then ordered his weapons carrier to stab him to death, as it was a great humiliation to be killed by a woman. The Israelites still remember this¹¹⁸.

117 Exodus 20: 4-5

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor [a]serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting[b] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,"

118 2 Samuel 11: 21

"Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?"—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

Tola and Jair

There were two judges in Israel after Abimelech's death, of which we do not know much. Tola acted as judge in Israel for 23 years; and then Jair acted as judge in Israel for 22 years. After Jair's death, the people sinned again by serving idols.

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15. Jephthah, Samson and Ruth

Judges 11 up to Judges 16 and Ruth 1 up to Ruth 4

God delivered His people

The Lord gave judges to His people who delivered them from their oppressors and guided them back to Him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God punished His people's disobedience.
- God delivered the people from their enemies when they sincerely confessed their sins and showed true repentance and converted back to Him.
- God also determined it in such a way that people of pagan descent were included in Christ's genealogy.

Jephthah to become leader for the Israelites

The Israelites again did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord, and He punished them by sending the Ammonites to invade Canaan from the east, while the Philistines invaded the land from the west at the same time. The Israelites had been in very difficult circumstances for eighteen years. So they removed all the idols from their midst and served God again in earnest.

The Ammonites camped at Gilead and when the Israelites saw this, they gathered at Mizpah to fight the Ammonites even though they did not have a commander. Jephthah, the son of Gilead, lived in the land of Tob. He was a very brave Israelite, but also the leader of a gang. The elders of the people asked him to be their leader. He refused at first, because his half-brothers drove him out of the country since he was another woman's son.

Jephthah eventually agreed to be their commander, on the condition that he remained their leader after the battle with the Ammonites. Jephthah first tried to negotiate with the Ammonites, but when they could not come to terms, the Ammonites withdrew from the negotiations and they made preparations to attack Israel.

Jephthah conquers the Ammonites

Jephthah had nothing to fear because the Spirit of God came upon him, but even though God was with him he still had doubts and that is why he asked God to help Israel. He also made a very tragic vow out of gratitude to God, which is that he would give up the first person to meet him from his home after his victory over the Ammonites.

The Lord used Jephthah as a tool to deliver Israel¹¹⁹. The Israelites completely defeated the Ammonites and drove them out of Canaan. They rejoiced at the victory, and Jephthah's daughter, his only child, went out from his home, cheerfully she was the first to receive him. Jephthah repented the vow, but after he informed his daughter about his vow, she was willing to carry out the promise her father had made. She asked Jephthah to allow her to spend two months with her friends, grieving that she would never be able to marry, after which she would put her whole life in the service of the Lord.

The Ephraimites then rebelled against Jephthah. They accused him of never asking them to fight alongside him against the Ammonites. Jephthah pointed out to them that he did call them up, but that there was no response on their part. Feelings ran high between Jephthah and the Ephraimites, and finally Jephthah rallied the men of Gilead to fight against Ephraim. Jephthah and his men defeated 42,000 Ephraimites.

We do not read much about the following three judges. After Jephthah's death, Ibzan judged the people for seven years, and Elon and ten years later by Abdon, who judged Israel for eight years, succeeded him. Abdon was buried in Ephraim.

The birth of Samson

Samson was a remarkable person. His father was Manoah and all we know about his mother is the fact that she was barren. The Angel of the Lord appeared to her and she was told that she would have a son. Centuries later, Jesus Christ's birth was announced in a similar way¹²⁰. The Angel went on to say that the boy would be a Nazirite of God, which meant that he had to

119 Hebrews 11: 32

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:"

120 Luke 1: 30-31

"Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus."

stand in the service of God for his entire life.

The Angel also conveyed his message to Manoah, and out of gratitude, Manoah offered a sacrifice to the Lord. He and his wife named the boy Samson. The name Samson means the “strong” or “mighty” one. Samson was not allowed to drink any strong drink (alcohol) ever or to cut his hair.

God blessed Samson’s childhood, and as a young man he fell in love with a Philistine woman who lived near them. His parents initially objected to his choice of marriage partner because she was a pagan woman, but they later went with Samson to Timnah, where the woman lived. They negotiated with her parents about certain conditions for the purpose of marriage. His parents did not know that the Spirit of the Lord drove Samson to go to the Philistines, for he had to deliver Israel from them.

One day, while Samson walked alone, a young lion stormed him. He grabbed the lion and killed it and left the lion’s carcass right there on the side of the road.

Samson’s marriage

On his way to the wedding, Samson used the same route again and he saw at the place where he had torn the lion apart that bees had nested in the carcass. Samson took some of the honey and ate it.

He then made a riddle of the events and presented it to his guests at the wedding (which lasted for seven days). If they managed to lay out the riddle correctly, they would receive a reward; but if they failed to do so, they had to give Samson a gift. When the guests failed to unravel the riddle, they threatened Samson’s wife and her family with death. She was obliged to provide them with the answer, so she begged Samson to give her the answer of the riddle.

The riddle was about the lion, which Samson killed, and the bees that nested in the lion’s carcass. When Samson communicated the answer, she gave the answer to their guests. Samson then had to give 30 men each, a set of clothes. He got hold of the clothes by beating 30 Philistines to death and taking their outfits. Samson was very angry with his wife, thus he left her and went back to his parent’s home. His father-in-law then gave his daughter (Samson’s wife) to one of the groomsmen.

After a while Samson returned to retrieve his wife. When he found out that she had been given to someone else, he was so angry that he caught 300 foxes and tied their tails together (two-two) with torches between the tails. He then released the foxes into the Philistines' wheatfields. The Philistines were very angry and burned his wife and her father.

The battle at Lehi

Samson, in response to the Philistines' actions, caused them great harm again. The Philistines raised an army to put him in his place, but when the Israelites saw the army, they became so frightened that they tied Samson up with ropes and delivered him to the Philistines. Samson allowed it.

The Philistines rejoiced during the extradition, but the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and he broke the cords and bonds. The Lord gave him the strength to break it without any effort. Samson then picked up a donkey's jawbone and killed 1,000 Philistines with it. What Joshua promised to the people then became true¹²¹. He named the place Lehi that meant "Jawbone."

Delilah betrayed Samson

Thereafter Samson fell in love with Delilah. She was a smart and jaded woman. On three occasions she tried to find out what Samson's secret to his great strength were for the Philistines, but she was without success. Every time Samson easily defeated the Philistines. She played on Samson's affections until he finally revealed his secret to her. He told her that he was a Nazirite of God. If his hair were cut, his strength would disappear and he would become weak and be like an ordinary person.

Delilah put him to sleep on her lap. She had a man come in to shave the seven hair braids off on his head and then she told Samson again that the Philistines were on him. Samson got up like the previous times to defeat them, but this time his hair was shaved off. The Lord was not with him anymore. The Philistines grabbed him and gouged his eyes out. They took him to Gaza and imprisoned him. His was the grinder in prison and it was a very hard job to do

121 Joshua 23: 10

"One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you."

Samson death

The Philistines held a great feast in the temple of their god Dagon. They were very happy that after twenty years they had finally captured Samson. They held a religious festival and thanked their god Dagon for the victory. They offered a great sacrifice to Dagon because according to them, he apparently surrendered Samson in their power. The Philistines saw their victory over Samson as a victory of Dagon over the Lord.

When the feast was in full swing, the merry feast-goers brought Samson to revel in his grief. When the people saw him, they began to praise their god, saying, "Our god has given our enemy into our power, our enemy who has so destroyed our country and killed so many of us!" His hair had grown since his capture and his strength had returned. He asked the boy holding his hand to guide him: "Let me stand by the pillars of the temple that I may lean against them." The temple was packed with men and women. All the leaders of the Philistines were there. On the roof of the temple there were also about 3,000 men and women who came to watch Samson entertain them. He then prayed to God for help. Samson prayed: "Oh Lord God, remember me! God, just make me so strong this one time that I can avenge myself on the Philistines for my eyes!" Samson pressed his hands against the two main pillars on which the building rested. He pressed each hand against a pillar, one with his right hand and one with his left hand. He caused the entire temple to collapse before the eyes of the thousands of feast-goers. With the collapse of the temple, all of them died, including Samson. His family took his body and buried him in the same grave as his father. With his death, he killed more people than he did in his entire life.

In the New Testament Samson is mentioned as one of the witnesses of faith¹²². He was indicative of Jesus Christ. Samson was willing to die in order to redeem his people through his death. Christ also laid down his life to save sinners from their sins¹²³. Samson could only temporarily deliver the people from their oppression, but Christ brought complete deliverance upon

122 Hebrews 11:32

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:"

123 John 4: 42

"Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

his death on the cross¹²⁴.

The history of Ruth

During the rule of the judges, a severe drought broke out in Canaan. Elimelech moved out of Bethlehem to look for food for his family and livestock. His wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved with him. Elimelech died in Moab. His two sons married Moabite women. The two Moabite women were very fond of Naomi. Mahlon and Chilion also died later and Naomi decided to return to Canaan, because the Lord had given the people of Canaan deliverance and food was plentiful again.

Naomi insisted with her two daughters-in-law that they stay in their own country, but Ruth and Orpah wanted to go with her. However, Naomi begged them to stay and Orpah then returned to her own people. Naomi asked Ruth to do the same, but she would not and replied, "Do not urge me to turn around, for where you go I will go; and where you stay I will stay; your people are my people and your God is my God." Naomi saw that Ruth was determined and they travelled together back to Bethlehem..

Naomi's return to Bethlehem

There was a great commotion in Bethlehem upon Naomi's return. Everyone was happy to see her again however, she was very sad because her husband and sons were dead. She asked the people not to call her Naomi anymore, but Mara, because Mara means "bitter."

Naomi and her daughter-in-law were very poor. They lost everything in Moab. Ruth had to pick up barley in the fields that were being harvest just so they could have something to eat. She walked behind the men who cut the barley and picked up all the veins, which they dropped or they accidentally didn't cut¹²⁵.

124 John 19: 30

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

125 Leviticus 19: 9-10

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God."

The land on which Ruth picked up veins belonged to Boaz. He heard how hard she worked and that she didn't go to rest in the shadows occasionally, like the other women. He asked his servants about her and they told him what had happened to her and Naomi and how she had returned from Moab with Naomi.

Boaz was impressed with Ruth and realized that Naomi was family. He instructed the workers to drop some of the barley intentionally so she could pick it up. Boaz then asked Ruth not to pick up barley on other lands and he invited her to dine and rest with his maids.

That night she excitedly told Naomi about Boaz who had acted so kindly towards her. Naomi was very pleased and explained to her that he was a close relative and one of their redeemers. A redeemer was someone who bought back land from a family member who had to sell his land to stay alive¹²⁶.

Ruth asked Boaz to be her redeemer

Naomi explained to Ruth how the right of redemption worked, after which Ruth lay down at the feet of Boaz one night, sleeping on the threshing floor. Boaz then asked her who was lying at his feet and she replied that it was her. She asked Boaz to act as her redeemer. Boaz listened intently, but there was only one problem, another family member had first right to act as redeemer. He promised that he would thoroughly investigate the matter and help them as far as he could.

Boaz praised Ruth for her good conduct. She didn't go after young men, but did what was right. Boaz knew exactly what Ruth wanted to achieve and admitted that she was a virtuous woman. He gave her a gift of barley and then sent her back to Naomi.

Boaz kept his promise to Ruth. He gathered ten men from among the elders of the city to explain his case to them. The other family member was also present and although he was willing to act as a redeemer, he did not see a way in which to marry Ruth. It was the duty of the redeemer to also marry the widow so that the deceased (Mahlon) could still acquire offspring to maintain his name in Israel.

126 Leviticus 25: 24-25

“And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land. If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold.”

Boaz marries Ruth

The man who did not want to act as a redeemer took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, as proof that the matter was in order. At that time, a shoe was proof that you owned something¹²⁷. In this way, the relative showed that he gave Boaz the opportunity to act as a redeemer. Boaz was then able to act as a redeemer and marry Ruth. The elders blessed Boaz and Ruth.

Boaz was very happy to have Ruth as his wife. Ruth later gave birth to a son and they named him Obed. He inherited everything that belonged to Elimelech, Naomi's husband. Obed's son was Jesse and he was the father of David. Jesus Christ was born of David's seed¹²⁸. God fulfilled His promise that there would come One who would deliver the people¹²⁹.

Boaz as a redeemer was indicative to Christ. Just as Boaz acted as redeemer to Ruth, Christ also interceded for us to save us from our sin.

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127 Psalm 60: 10

“Is it not You, O God, who cast us off? And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?”

128 Matthew 1: 5-6

“Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.”

129 Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

16. Eli and Samuel

1 Samuel 1 up to 1 Samuel 8

God demands obedience

God wants His children to be obedient. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Parents have to discipline their children.
- God is not to be manipulated by people who want to promote their own ideas.
- The Lord protects his people.

Eli high priest in Shiloh

The rule of the judges' period ended with Eli and Samuel. Eli was a Levite who served as high priest at the sanctuary in Shiloh. He had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were scoundrels who did not obey the Lord and who stole of the offerings. The priests were allowed to take a part of the sacrifices¹³⁰ but Hophni and Phinehas forced the people to give them more than their due.

These two sons of Eli also lived a promiscuous life. Eli heard this and earnestly admonished his sons. However, he did not punish them as he was supposed to. His sons didn't mind him and just continued to live immorally. The Lord wanted them dead but He rejected them and gave them over to their sinful desires¹³¹.

Hannah visits the temple

Eli was as high priest, always busy in and around the house of the Lord. The people brought their tithe, prayed there, and asked him to sacrifice on their behalf. He was sitting at the entrance to the tabernacle one day when he saw a woman muttering words while there were tears that rolled down her

130 Leviticus 7: 31-32

“And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'. Also the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offerings.”

131 Revelation 22:11

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”

cheeks. Eli thought she was drunk and addressed her sharply about her poor behaviour. She then explained to him that she was not drunk, but just very sad. She really wanted to have a baby, but God didn't give her one. That was why she came to pray in the temple.

Eli regretted his hasty reactions and blessed her before she went home. The woman's name was Hannah and her husband's name was Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. Peninnah mocked Hannah for not having any children and then she became very sad. Therefore, she made a vow that when the Lord gave her a son, she would put the child in God's service.

The birth of Samuel

The Lord answered Hannah's prayer. She had a son and named him Samuel. The name Samuel means in Hebrew "because I have asked for him from the Lord." She kept her vow, and when her son was a little bigger, she took him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh and gave him up to the Lord. She had more children after Samuel, and every year when she went with her husband to Shiloh to worship there, she would take Samuel a mantle.

Hannah, after God heard her prayer, sang a hymn to his glory. Like Mary, Jesus' mother, she praised God for his great grace¹³².

God then sent a prophet to Eli to announce his judgment on him and his house. The prophet first told Eli what Hophni and Phinehas had done wrong, and then he showed Eli his own sin. He did not steal from the sacrifices like his sons, but he did not punish his sons as strictly as he was supposed to. To him, the kindness of his sons was more important than the glory of the Lord.

The Judgment of the House of Eli

The Lord punished Eli. No one from Eli's house would grow old, because they would all die at an early age. Eli himself would experience the death of his two sons.

The matter was of the utmost importance, in fact so important that the Lord

132 Luke 1: 46-48

"And Mary said: "My soul [a]magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed."

also spoke to Eli about the matter through the young boy Samuel. While Samuel slept one night in the tabernacle, he heard a voice crying out to him: “Samuel, Samuel!” He got up and went to Eli because he thought that it was Eli who called him. Eli, however, told him that he did not call him. Samuel was barely lying down when he heard the voice again. He got up and went to Eli, but Eli sent him back again. When he heard this voice a third time, Eli told him to answer, “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.”

The Lord told Samuel about a terrible judgment that would come upon Eli and his house. It was the same message as that of the Prophet. Samuel was too afraid to tell Eli, but Eli called him early the next morning to hear what the Lord had said. Eli forced Samuel to tell him everything, which the Lord had said to Samuel. Eli accepted God’s judgment in resignation, saying “He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes.” He realized that he deserved God’s punishment, but he did nothing to rectify the matter.

The Judgement

The Lord disposed of it in such a way that the Philistines invaded and plundered the land again. The Israelite army went out to fight the Philistines. The Philistines defeated Israel, and 4,000 Israelites died. The people realized that the Lord had given the victory to the Philistines, but they would not admit that it was because of their sin.

They fetched the ark at Shiloh in the hope that their luck would change. Hophni and Phinehas were at the tabernacle, giving the people permission to take the ark to the battlefield. They went along with the people to the battlefield and when the Israelite army saw the ark, they were rejoiced. Unfortunately they were under the wrong impression; they thought that God was on their side from that moment on.

The Philistines became frightened when they heard the Israelites’ shouts and said to one another: “God has come into the camp.” However, they did not back down, but urged each other to fight bravely. Israel believed they could force the Lord to help them, but they were wrong, for God cannot be dictated by man¹³³.

133 Isaiah 40: 14

“With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding?”

The Philistines defeated Israel

The Philistines inflicted a crushing defeat on Israel and more than 30,000 Israelite soldiers died. Hophni and Phinehas were also killed, and the Philistines carried the ark of the Lord away with them. In the meantime Eli heard that Hophni and Phinehas had taken the ark with them and he was already 98 years old and nearly blind at that time.

He sat on a chair at the gate waiting for any news from the front. A messenger came running and informed him that Hophni and Phinehas were dead, and when he told Eli about the ark and how the Philistines had taken it, Eli was so shocked that he fell backwards and broke his neck. What God said would happen to Eli and his house was fulfilled. Eli's entire household died.

Phinehas' wife gave birth to a boy in the midst of events. Before she died she called the boy Ichabod. Ichabod means, "the ark, the glory of God, is gone from Israel."

The Ark at the Philistines

The Philistines returned to Philistia after their victory with the ark. The Philistines believed that without the ark, Israel was helpless. They placed the ark in their temple in Ashdod, next to the image of their god Dagon. The next morning they saw that Dagon had fallen off his stand and was laying face first on the ground. They carefully picked up the statue and put it back on its stand. The next morning Dagon was lying on the ground again and this time his arms and head were broken off.

The Philistines also became very ill in Ashdod. God struck them with horrible boils. Thousands of mice also caused great damage by wrecking and eating their wheat. The Philistines realized that all those things were happening to them because they had the ark with them, and so they decided to send the ark to Gad. However, the people of Gad also became very sick because the ark was with them. They then sent the ark to Ekron, but the city's inhabitants protested so vehemently that the Philistine princes decided to send the ark back to Israel for it was a war trophy they didn't want anymore.

The princes enlisted the help of their priests and their diviners. The priests and diviners said that they were not to send the ark back to Israel empty, but that in order to be healed; they had to give God a guilt offering. The guilt offering was to consist of five golden boils and five golden mice. They had to load the ark onto a new wagon pulled by two cows. The cow's transom (calf)

had to be left behind. They had to place the guilt offering (the five golden figurines of the boils and the five golden figurines of the mice) in a box and place it next to the ark. They were also to give glory to the God of Israel; for perhaps he would then lighten his hand towards them.

The Ark returned to Israel

The Philistines took two cows and harnessed them in front of the cart, keeping their transom in the fold. Then they put the ark of the Lord and the box containing the golden mice and the images of the boils on the chariot. The cows walked straight down the road to Beth Shemesh. They did not turn left or right all the while the Philistine rulers walked after them as far as the territory of Beth Shemesh. The Israelites of Beth Shemesh, a Levite city¹³⁴, were cutting wheat. When they saw the ark, they were overjoyed. Out of gratitude, they sacrificed the cows to the Lord on a fire they had made from the carts wood.

The Levites unloaded the ark of the Lord and the box containing the golden vessels and placed them on a large stone. On that day the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and animal sacrifices to the Lord. When the five Philistine rulers saw this, they returned to Ekron.

The Israelite inhabitants of Beth Shemesh came to view the ark curiously and without reverence. That same day, 70 curious people died. This was something that God strictly forbade¹³⁵. Greatly startled, they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim: "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the Lord. Come and take it to you." The people of Kirjath Jearim came and brought the ark to the house of Abinadab. They consecrated (sanctified) his son Eleazar to tend the ark of the Lord.

134 Joshua 21: 13-16

"Thus to the children of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Libnah with its common-land, Jattir with its common-land, Eshtemoa with its common-land, Holon with its common-land, Debir with its common-land, Ain with its common-land, Juttah with its common-land, and Beth Shemesh with its common-land: nine cities from those two tribes;

135 Numbers 4: 5-6

"When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles."

Samuel in Mizpah

Twenty years have passed ever since the ark in Kirjath Jearim got a stand. All the Israelites complained to the Lord about their affliction. Samuel told them to remove all foreign gods (Baals and Ashtoreths) from their possession, set their hearts on the Lord, and serve Him alone.

He then ordered the people to gather at Mizpah so that he could pray for them there. The people drew water and poured it out before the Lord. In doing so, they showed how deep their distress and misery were¹³⁶. They also fasted and admitted that they had sinned.

When the Philistines heard about this, they immediately moved to Mizpah to fight Israel. The Israelites were worried and uncertain, because they were afraid of the Philistines. Samuel prayed to God, and God disposed of it in such a way that a violent thunderstorm broke out upon the Philistines. The storm was so severe that confusion broke out among the Philistines, and they were defeated by the Israelites. The Israelites pursued the Philistines from Mizpah and drove them to the bottom of Beth Car. Samuel erected a memorial with a stone there and he named the place Ebenezer, which means, "up to this point the Lord has helped us."

The people wanted a king

When Samuel became too old to visit the remote parts of the country, he hired his two sons to help him with his work. They were not exemplary men and sinned continuously. The people complained to Samuel about this and requested him to appoint them a king who could rule over them.

Samuel disagreed with the request. He believed, as did Gideon, that the Lord was their King¹³⁷. God was in fact Israel's King. Samuel consulted God, and God told Samuel that the people had not rejected him as leader, priest, and prophet, but had rejected Him (God Himself) as King.

God commanded him to let the people have their way. Samuel warned the people that a king would make many demands on them, but they would not

136 Lamentations 2: 19

""Arise, cry out in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him For the life of your young children,Who faint from hunger at the head of every street."

137 Judges 8: 23

"But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."

listen. They demanded that they want a king like other peoples. Samuel sent them home to wait for God to designate a king for them.

Theocracy, which means government directed by God Himself, came to an end in Israel. The leaders (judges) sent by God to lead and save Israel were replaced by Kings (Saul and then David). Samuel himself was a special figure. He was not only a priest, but also the last judge¹³⁸. He was also indicative of Christ, who is the perfect King, Prophet and Priest.

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138 Acts 13:20

“After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.”

17. Saul, the first king

1 Samuel 9 up to 1 Samuel 16

God called specific people

God called and appointed persons to act as an instrument of Providence, in his service to carry out his will. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God calls who He wants to act in his service.
- True religion requires obedience to the Word of the Lord.
- God does not tolerate any obstinate religion.

Samuel meets Saul

The Israelites wanted to have a king like all the other nations they encountered, even though Samuel thought that it was very wrong. He thus prayed to God and the Lord told him to anoint a king for the people, for they did not reject Samuel, but Him (God Himself) as king over them.

Kish was from the tribe of Benjamin, and he was a very rich man. He had a son named Saul, who was strong, beautiful and a head taller than the rest of his compatriots.

Some of Kish's donkeys went missing and he sent his son Saul to search for them but Saul was not able to find the donkeys. His servant suggested that they go to Samuel in Ramah to ask him if he could help them find the donkeys. Saul and his servant found Samuel at the city gate, on his way to offer a sacrifice outside the city on a hill.

When Samuel saw the tall, beautiful, young man, the Lord informed him that Saul was the future king. God had already told Samuel the day before that He would send a man from Benjamin to him to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. Samuel invited Saul to dine with him. Samuel then also told Saul that his father had already gotten the donkeys that were gone.

Saul anointed as king

At the sacrificial meal, Samuel seated Saul at the place of honour on the

table. Saul spent the night with Samuel, and when Saul left the next morning, Samuel walked with him. Samuel anointed Saul as the king over Israel at a remote place. He gave Saul some evidence that he was really called by the Lord as king of Israel. First there would be two men confirming that his father got his donkeys back. He would then encounter three men who were on their way to sacrifice and they would offer him two loaves of bread, which he had to take from them. Finally, he would meet a group of prophets and he would begin to prophesy with them.

Everything happened exactly as Samuel had predicted. Yet Saul did not tell anyone that Samuel had anointed him as king over Israel. In Gibeah he prophesied with the prophets of Gibeah. Some of the people saw him prophesying and were astonished. Saul then stayed at his father's house until his inauguration as king.

Saul proclaimed as king

Samuel called the people together in Mizpah to present their king to them. Fate was cast and it designated for Saul. However, he was nowhere to be found. They finally found him hiding among the equipment. They brought him before the people, and when they saw he was taller than the rest of the Israelites, they cried out "Long live the king!"

Samuel then made known the law of the king to the people and went home. Saul also returned to Gibeah, because some of the people did not recognize him as king.

The Ammonites invaded Gilead

The Ammonites invaded Gilead some time later and the inhabitants of Jabesh in Gilead realized that they did not stand a chance against the Ammonites. They therefore wanted to make a covenant with the Ammonites, accordingly to which they would serve the Ammonites. The Ammonites' king agreed on condition that the right eye of all who lived in Jabesh should be gouged out. The inhabitants of Jabesh were very sad and upset because the chances were extremely slim that someone would come and help them.

The messengers of Jabesh arrived in Gibeah, and when Saul heard what had happened, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. He chopped some of his draught oxen to pieces and sent them with messengers throughout the country. He sent a message along with the pieces of meat that every Israelite

who would not fight the Ammonites with him and Samuel would have their cattle chopped to pieces. An army of 330,000 men arrived at Bezek to fight alongside Saul against the Ammonites.

The people recognized Saul as king

The messengers returned to Jabesh and told the inhabitants that help will arrive when the sun would be at its hottest the next day. Saul passed through the Jordan during the night and early the next morning Saul set his men up in three divisions. He attacked and defeated the Ammonites. All the people rejoiced that he had delivered Jabesh from the Ammonites and recognized him as their king from then on. Much later, when Saul was dead, the men of Jabesh showed honour to Saul by fetching and burying his body when he passed away¹³⁹.

Saul was king of the people, and therefore Samuel no longer acted as a judge and from then he was just priest and prophet and upon his retirement as judge, he gave a special farewell address. Just like Joshua, he also pleaded with the people that they should continue with serving the Lord. He warned them that if they misbehaved, they and their king would perish.

Saul immediately took measures to protect the land from the Philistines. At Gibeah, his son Jonathan risked an attack on the Philistines and he was victorious. Saul informed all of Israel about this victory and called on them to fight the Philistines. The Philistine army had 3,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and Israel had to flee before the Philistines. Saul retreated to Gilgal and waited for Samuel in order to bring sacrifice to the Lord before moving out again to fight against the Philistines.

Saul was disobedient

Saul obediently awaited Samuel's arrival, but he did not come. This made that Saul became distressed, for his army grew smaller because his men ran away. What was he to do? Samuel did not show up to offer the burnt offering, slaughter the thanksgiving offerings, and beg the Lord for mercy. The sacrificial animals stood ready, and when Samuel had not arrived after

139 2 Samuel 2: 4-5

"Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul." So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, "You are blessed of the Lord, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him."

seven days, Saul decided to sacrifice to the Lord himself. Saul disobeyed, because he was not a priest and only priests could bring sacrifices to the Lord¹⁴⁰. Although Saul's actions seemed very pious, they went against God's explicit command! Only Samuel could have offered those sacrifices.

Just as Saul was ready to start the offerings, Samuel arrived. Samuel had waited a very long time to test whether or not Saul would obey the Lord. Saul did not listen to the Lord, but rather did what he himself thought was right. Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, then told Saul that he had acted foolishly by not listening to God's commandment. If he had obeyed, the Lord would have confirmed his kingship over Israel for good, but because of his disobedience, the Lord would take away the kingship and give it to another. The Lord sought for Him a man after His heart to act as king over His people.

Saul was powerless without the Lord's help. The Philistine army marched throughout the land, plundering everything. Only 600 men remained with Saul. The Israelites also had no weapons, due to the fact that the Philistines eliminated all those who could manufacture weapons in Canaan.

Jonathan

The Lord did not leave his people alone. Jonathan launched another attack on 20 Philistines and defeated them. The others were afraid and fled. The Lord struck them with an earthquake while they fled, and it scared them even more. Saul then realized that it was time to attack.

They defeated the Philistines. The Israelite soldiers who ran away returned to Saul and he forbade his soldiers from eating before sunset, as he wanted to try to drive the Philistines out of Canaan altogether.

However, Jonathan who fought at the forefront of the battle did not know about the order Saul gave and he ate some of the wild honey he found in the field. One of the men reprimanded him and told him that his father had cursed the man eating something before sunset. Jonathan replied that his father's actions were the reason the country was plunged in this mess of a war. He was convinced that the people were run down because they were not allowed to eat anything. By evening, the other soldiers were so hungry that they ate raw meat, something that was unacceptable to the Israelites.

140 Numbers 18: 7

"Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

Saul asked God if he should pursue the Philistines further, but God did not answer. Saul immediately assumed that someone had sinned, and he cast lots to determine who the culprit was. Fate designated Jonathan and he admitted that he ate honey during the day however the people objected so strongly to his punishment that Jonathan did not receive the death penalty. Even though Israel defeated the Philistines, it was a sad day for Saul. The people honoured Jonathan above him. That day was Jonathan's day and not Saul's day. After that, Saul and Jonathan's relationship was irretrievably broken.

Saul defeated the Amalekites

The Lord instructed Samuel to go and instruct Saul he had to annihilate the Amalekites because they had attacked Israel in the wilderness. He must not spare any people or animals, everything had to be killed and burned. Saul carried out the command of God, but he spared the life of Agag, king of the Amalekites, and brought back the best livestock as pillage.

Saul was very pleased with his victory and erected a memorial in honour of his victory. However, this served as a sign of his self-will and this culminated in his downfall.

Samuel met Saul upon his return at Gilgal. Saul greeted Samuel with the words that the command of the Lord was carried out. Samuel wanted to know from Saul why he heard a roar of small stocks and cattle. Saul explained that he had brought the best livestock that he took from the Amalekites to offer to the Lord.

Saul justified his own actions and even hinted that he obeyed God. Samuel replied to him that the Lord would not appease him through sacrifices. Obeying the Lord was better than bringing Him offerings and listening to the Lord was better than sacrificing the fat of rams¹⁴¹. Saul committed a serious transgression by not listening to God. Samuel told Saul that rebellion and waywardness were the sins of divination, iniquity and idolatry.

God rejected Saul

Saul's sins are mentioned by name: rebellion (stubbornness and rejection) and waywardness. Samuel also indicated why Saul's sins were a transgression of

141 Psalm 40: 7

"Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me."

God's law. Samuel equates Saul's sins with divination, iniquity, and idolatry. This meant that Saul had transgressed the first and second commandments of God's law¹⁴². Saul, by his rebellion, did not serve God but himself. By his self-will, he rejected God and served an idol, himself. Samuel did not say that it was wrong to sacrifice to the Lord, but that the Lord actually seeks an obedient heart¹⁴³.

The Lord repented for appointing Saul as king. Therefore, Samuel told Saul that God had rejected him because he did not want to obey the Lord's words. Saul asked for forgiveness and requested Samuel to go with him so he could worship the Lord. He wasn't looking for true forgiveness, though, because as it was confirmed later, he was actually more concerned about his good name. This is why he asked Samuel to honour him before the people before they would pray to God. However, his sentence remained unchanged. He rejected the word of the Lord, so God rejected him as king.

Saul grabbed Samuel's robe as Samuel turned to walk away, and in the process he tore a piece of his robe off. Samuel then explained to Saul that God would also tear the kingship from him and give it to another man. Thereafter, Samuel killed Agag, the Amalekites' king, and returned to Ramah. Samuel never saw Saul again after these events.

142 Exodus 20: 3-6

““You shall have no other gods before Me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor [a] serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting[b] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

143 Hosea 6:6

“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

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18. Bid farewell to Galilee

Matthew 17: 1 up to Matthew 18: 35; Mark 9: 38 – 41; Luke 9: 28 – 56 and John 7: 1 - 9

Jesus honoured as King

God gave all authority to Jesus in both heaven and earth, and honoured Him as King over all things. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God confirmed from heaven that Jesus is his Son.
- Satan's and his angels' (demons) fate are resigned to Jesus.
- Jesus taught his followers to acknowledge and honour his kingship in every facet of life.

Jesus nears the way to the cross

The Lord Jesus' last months in Capernaum were not peaceful. Multitudes of people turned their backs on Him because He did not want to be their king and deliver them from the Romans. King Herod and the Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat, but they could do nothing about Him, because His time to suffer and die had not come yet. He isolated himself into remote regions to teach his disciples. One day He deliberately moved toward Jerusalem and passed through Capernaum for the last time; the place where He did so many wonders and taught so many people.

Jesus on the mount of transfiguration

The Lord Jesus, while still in the area of Caesarea Philippi, climbed a high mountain with Peter, John and James to pray. Jesus separated himself from them on top of the mountain for prayer and while He was praying, His countenance changed and His divine glory was visible for a short time¹⁴⁴. His face beamed like the sun and his clothes were dazzling white. Peter's confession that Jesus is the Son of God was confirmed at that moment. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke to Jesus. Moses and Elijah

144 2 Peter 1: 17

"For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

informed him of what would happen to him in Jerusalem: his imprisonment, death and resurrection.

Moses was the man who led the exodus of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. At the end of his life, he himself had quite an exodus (departure) because God buried him in an unknown location and unknown tomb¹⁴⁵. Elijah had a superhuman exodus because God took him up to heaven with a fiery chariot¹⁴⁶. Jesus would also undergo a Divine exodus; a death on the cross, followed by a resurrection and then an ascension! Moses and Elijah assisted Him. Their presence and appearance reminded the disciples of Jesus' true identity so that they could better understand Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension into heaven..

The transfiguration on the mountain

We need to see Moses and Elijah as representatives of the revelation of God in the Old Testament. Moses represented the law and Elijah the prophets. Jesus came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, the entire Old Testament¹⁴⁷. Thus Jesus had to go on the way of suffering to complete the work that these great representatives of the law and the prophets had begun.

God the Father strengthened Jesus through that appearance. His disciples had fallen asleep, and when they woke up, they were astounded and astonished to see His glory and the two prophets. They had never experienced such glory! Peter immediately wanted to make them three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Peter wanted to stay in that moment because he didn't understand that there was a much greater glory awaiting Jesus (and all believers) after Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. While Peter was speaking, a brightly lit cloud casted a shadow over them. A voice from the cloud said: "This is my beloved Son, over whom I rejoice. Listen to Him." The cloud was a sign of the revelatory and yet concealed presence of God.

145 Deuteronomy 34: 5-6 "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day."

146 2 Kings 2: 11 "Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

147 Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil."

The disciples became terrified and fell to the ground. Jesus touched them, saying, "Get up and don't be afraid." When they looked up Jesus was alone, Moses and Elijah were gone. The glorious manifestation was over. Jesus instructed them not to tell anyone about the vision; they had to wait with the news until after He had risen from the dead.

For the second time, Jesus spoke of his death, but the disciples did not dare to ask him about it. They did argue among themselves about what that meant.

The conversation about Elijah

The disciples asked Jesus why the scribes always told everyone that Elijah had to come first. Jesus explained that it was true and told them that Elijah had already come. Jesus had also pointed out to them on a previous occasion that John the Baptist was the Elijah, who was to come¹⁴⁸. John the Baptist was not recognized as such by the people. The leaders of the people did not recognize him and they did with him what they wanted. Herod even captured and killed him! That's how it went with him and therefore he was indeed the predecessor of the Messiah. This was yet another proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

A boy healed

At the foot of the mountain Jesus was met by a multitude of people (a huge crowd). A man from the crowd called out to him and asked Jesus to look at his only son because he had epilepsy (In those times they referred to it as moonstruck). He begged the disciples to heal his son, but they couldn't. Jesus chided his disciples for their disbelief, calling them a perverse generation.

At Jesus's command the father brought his son to him. The evil spirit in the boy resisted by grabbing and throwing the boy down so that he rolled around and there was foam coming from his mouth. Jesus asked the father how long these things had happened to his son and the father explained that since early childhood the evil spirit has been dropping the boy in water and fire in order to kill him. He pleaded with Jesus to have mercy on his child. When asked by the father, Jesus answered that all things are possible for the one who believes. Immediately, the father cried out with tears that he believed, but that he also had doubts. He asked Jesus to help him in his doubts. The

148 Matthew 11: 13-14

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."

Lord Jesus then healed the boy.

Jesus's disciples later asked him why they could not heal the boy. He explained that their faith was too small. Jesus assured them that if their faith were but as big as a mustard seed, impossible things would become possible for them. The mustard seed is the smallest seed and this small seed becomes a mighty tree. So too must our faith be. Even though it seems trifle, it possesses inner strength and the ability to accomplish great things¹⁴⁹. The Lord Jesus declared that evil spirits can only be cast out through prayer.

Temple tax

On the way to Capernaum, the Lord Jesus said for the third time that He would be killed but that He would rise on the third day. The disciples didn't understand this, but they didn't question him either.

Upon arriving in Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax wanted to know from Peter why Jesus had not paid temple tax. Every Jew above the age of 20 was required to pay an annual temple tax of a half shekel (double drachma)¹⁵⁰. The people who celebrated Passover in Jerusalem paid the temple tax there. The money changers in the temple collected the temple tax¹⁵¹. Those who did not go up to Jerusalem for Easter were addressed locally by the collectors for the temple tax and because Jesus was moving around northern Galilee during Easter, there was no opportunity to pay the tax. However, He was back in Capernaum and the collectors demanded the temple tax from Him. Peter replied that Jesus does pay temple tax, but in the house Jesus explained to Peter that, in fact, He does not need to pay the temple tax because He is the Son of God.

It was part of Jesus's humiliation and suffering to be treated like a common taxpayer. Jesus sent Peter out to the sea. He had to throw out a fishhook and

149 Mark 11: 23

"For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says."

150 Exodus 30: 13

"This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty gerahs). The half-shekel shall be an offering to the Lord."

151 Matthew 21: 12

"Then Jesus went into the temple [a]of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves."

pull out the first fish to bite on the hook. He would find in the mouth of this fish a silver coin that he had to give to the collectors as their tax payment.

The greatest kingdom of heaven

The disciples quarrelled between themselves while they travelled to Capernaum. They wondered about the possible places they would occupy in the kingdom of heaven. In Capernaum, Jesus asked them what they were arguing about. They dodged his question and did not reply to it. Jesus then answered their question about “who will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Jesus explained to them that the values in the kingdom of heaven differ from those here on earth. This means that those who are first on earth will not be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are the least, slightest and humblest on earth will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He who is served by everyone on earth will not be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, but the person who was everyone’s servant will be.

Jesus emphasized that there is no place in the kingdom of heaven for envy, jealousy, or to be in the pursuit of the highest ranks, but there is place for those rendering of service and humility¹⁵².

He called a little child closer and left him standing between them. He explained that if they did not change and become like a little child, they would certainly never enter the kingdom of heaven. For whoever humbles himself and considers himself small as a little child will be the most important and the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus also spoke about everyone who receives such children in his name. A child is an example of someone who is weak and in need of care. Jesus explained that the weak and needy were to be received with the same love and care that a little child receives when growing up.

Tolerance prompted

The disciples did not understand that Jesus was not only talking about actual children, but also about people who were still “children” with regards to everything related with God. John told Jesus that they had seen a man

152 1 Peter 5: 6

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

who was casting out demons in His name. Yet he was not one of Jesus's followers and thus the disciples viewed him as an outsider, they addressed and forbade him from continuing what he was doing. Jesus then pointed out to his disciples that anyone doing a mighty deed in His name would not speak evil of Him.

It was wrong for the disciples to forbid that man from continuing to cast out demons. It's not about whether he follows "us," but whether he follows Christ! Therefore, on the basis of God's Word, we must be tolerant of people of other denominations in order to promote the kingdom.

Dealing with a sinning brother

Jesus talked about building up his congregation and explained that it was important to keep mutual peace so that the "little ones" (the weak in the faith) could be preserved¹⁵³. To achieve this, there had to be an orderly arrangement and the friars had to act accordingly. The fundamental principle was the forgiveness of sins and the preservation of fellow believers.

When your brother has sinned against you, there are several steps to be taken to restore peace and keep your brother. First, you need to discuss the matter with him aside and alone. If he listened to you and you were able to resolve the dispute, you have recommitted your brother to yourself and kept him for the congregation. However, if he does not comply, you must then take one or two witnesses with you as determined by the law, in order to exert more influence on the brother to resolve the dispute¹⁵⁴. If he still does not comply, the whole congregation must get involved. It is about the well-being of the congregation and therefore the congregation must work together to retain one member. If he persists further in his irreconcilability, he should be regarded as a gentile and a tax collector; and this mean that he will be excluded from the congregation, but the congregation must still pray for him.

The forgiveness of each other's sins

Jesus talked a lot about the kingdom of heaven in Capernaum. He explained that one should go to your brother when he has sinned against you and

153 Romans 14: 19

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."

154 Deuteronomy 19: 15

"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."

reprimand him. Peter then asked Jesus if it was enough if you forgive your brother who sinned against you seven times. Jesus answered him that you must forgive him seventy times seven.

Jesus meant that it was not a matter of quantity, but a matter of quality. His followers must have the attitude to forgive, as often as someone came to them with repentance. They had to reveal the attitude of the heavenly Father. He forgives us without boundary or limit¹⁵⁵. Jesus told the parable of the merciless creditor to explain this.

The parable of the unforgiving servant

A certain king wanted to square up with his servants (officials). One of his servants who owed him ten thousand talents (millions of rands in today's terms) appeared before him. It soon became clear that he could not pay his debts. The king ordered that he, his wife and children be sold as slaves and that all his possessions should be sold to pay off his debts! The servant fell down before the king and begged him for a reprieve. He promised to pay his debts. However, he knew and the king knew that he would never be able to repay such a huge amount. The king took pity on him, let him go, and wrote off his debts.

When that servant came outside, he ran into one of his fellow servants who owed him only a hundred pence (in today's terms only a few rands). He grabbed and strangled him and then he ordered him to pay his debts. The other servant pleaded for a reprieve, but he wouldn't give the fellow servant any reprieve on his debt. He then left to have the fellow servant thrown in jail until he paid the debt.

When the king heard about this he was livid with fury and he ordered that the servant be captured and surrendered to him where he was to be tortured until he paid all his debts. Likewise, the heavenly Father will do unto each of us if we do not forgive our brother wholeheartedly.

On the way to Jerusalem

Jesus did not stay very long in Capernaum. The people were disappointed because he didn't want to be king. The influential Pharisees and scribes became increasingly defiant, and many of His disciples abandoned Him. The

155 Ephesians 4: 32

“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Jews were moving up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles.

Jesus' brothers told him to go to Judea so that his disciples there could also see the miracles he was doing. According to them the people needed to see the miracles he performed first hand if, He wanted to be acknowledged as the Messiah. His brothers, like most of the other Jews, expected an earthly Messiah and did not believe in Him. Jesus answered them that He would not go to the festival because His time had not yet come.

After His brothers left, He remained in Capernaum. He later left secretly (by another road), for Jerusalem. Jesus was waiting on God's appointed time, and did not want to get ahead of things.

A Samaritan village rejects the Saviour

Jesus left Capernaum for the last time and travelled to the south. He sent messengers before Him to find accommodation, but in a Samaritan town the people would not receive Him because He was going to Jerusalem. John and James were very angry about this and asked Jesus if they should bring down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, as Elijah had done centuries earlier¹⁵⁶?

Jesus turned around and told them that they did not know what they were talking about, because the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but precisely to save them. They then left for another village. Samaria would hear the gospel after the events of the Pentecost¹⁵⁷ and then many would be saved¹⁵⁸.

156 2 Kings 1: 10

"So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty."

157 Acts 1: 8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

158 Acts 8: 5-6

"Then Philip went down to [a]the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

Recommended reading

BOOYENS, M.J. 2005. Laat my lammers wei. Pretoria: EFJS Drukkers 163 - 168 p.

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19. The feast of the Tabernacles

Luke 10: 1 – 24 and John 7: 1 up to John 9: 41

The work Jesus did was double-edged

To many people Jesus' preaching is a cause of annoyance, but to the elect, it is the message of salvation and the remission of sins. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Jesus passes the proud Pharisees and makes God's plan of salvation known to simple people.
- For those who did not believe in Jesus, his preaching was a source of annoyance.
- For the believers, the Lord Jesus' preaching was a source of great joy

The seventy send out

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus sent seventy disciples before Him to every city and place He would later go. These seventy disciples were ordinary pupils of the Lord Jesus. His twelve known disciples were not among them. Those seventy disciples had to go like lambs amongst the wolves, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is near. They had to travel in two's and they received the ability to heal the sick. Whoever listened to them also listened to Jesus, and whoever rejected them rejected Jesus.

The number 12 referred to the twelve tribes of Israel and was thus representative of Israel, while the number 70 was indicative to the 70 elders whom Moses appointed as judges and caretakers over the nation.

The Lord Jesus, while giving the 70 disciples His commands, referred to the cities of Galilee that rejected Him. He pronounced a judgment on Chorazin and Bethsaida, for if the people in Tyre and Sidon (heathen cities) had seen these mighty deeds, which took place in them (Chorazin and Bethsaida), they would have repented long ago while they were sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Consequently, the people in Capernaum will be judged more harshly for hearing the Word of God but not adhering thereto.

The seventy return with joy

The 70 disciples joyfully returned and told Jesus that the demons resigned to His name as well. Jesus was grateful for these reports. He declared that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning¹⁵⁹. The work of the 70 contributed to the fall of Satan¹⁶⁰. Satan was losing the battle. Jesus would finally conquer him.

Although Satan is still tremendously strong on earth, believers need not fear him anymore. God has given believers the power to tread on snakes and scorpions, that is, to triumph over all the satanic forces, in whatever form or appearance. Nothing can harm us, for God preserves us¹⁶¹.

However, Jesus warned them not to rejoice because the spirits had submitted to them, but they should rejoice because their names were written in heaven¹⁶².

Jesus rejoices in the Spirit

On that occasion, Jesus rejoiced and praised His Father, the God of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from wise and educated people and revealing them to little children (simple ones). This was the Father's intention by His grace. The Father surrendered and entrusted everything to Jesus Christ. No one knows the Son but the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and everyone to whom He wishes it revealed. Jesus invited all who were weary, depleted and burdened to come to him. They would get rest with Him. They had to take up His yoke and learn from him, for He is gentle and humble in heart. His yoke is easy and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Take note that Jesus' invitation also applies to us!

159 Revelation 12: 9	“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”
160 Revelation 12: 11	“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.
161 Revelation 3: 10	“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”
162 Hebrew 12: 22-23	“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,”

Jesus also declared to his disciples that they were blessed, because their eyes saw which very few people saw. There were many kings and prophets from the Old Testament who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, but they did not live to experience it. The disciples received that privilege, so they were the pardoned ones of the Lord and that is why He called them blessed.

The feast of the Tabernacles

The Feast of the Tabernacles was a special occasion in Jewish folk life. It was originally set up to keep the passage through the desert in grateful remembrance¹⁶³.

The festival got its name, Sukkot (Succoth), which means “hut” from the instruction in the Old Testament to build a temporary abode and to live in that temporary hut for the duration of the festival. The temporary hut was made of palm tree branches as well as other branches and the people lived in the huts for seven days. The festival was celebrated with great joy as a festival of thanksgiving or harvest, for by that time the harvest had been gathered. Thus, Sukkot was the feast of the final harvest¹⁶⁴.

Furthermore, during this festive season the people particularly prayed for rain in the new season. In the early history of Israel, the Feast of the Tabernacles fell into abeyance, but after the exile it was reinstated. It is celebrated in the seventh month of Tishrei (October) of the Jewish year, five days after the Day of Atonement. It lasts seven days in which sacrifices are made and it is merrily celebrated with singing, music and torch dances.

Jesus at the feast

During the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem, the Galileans rebelled against the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. They were unable to get used to the harsh yoke of the Romans and Pilate brutally suppressed their revolt.

163 Deuteronomy 16: 13 “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.”

164 Revelation 14: 14-16 “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come [a]for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

The rebellious Galileans were still making their sacrifices in the temple court, when the Roman soldiers attacked them, mixing their blood with the blood of their sacrifices.

The people were dismayed and discouraged, longing for the promised Messiah. They began to hope that Jesus might have been the long-awaited Messiah. Wouldn't He perhaps come forward and set up His kingdom? They started asking for Him and looking for Him, but He wasn't at the feast yet.

On about the fourth day of the festival, Jesus arrived in the temple and began teaching the people there, as He had done during His previous visit. His preaching made a deep impression on everyone, even his opponents. However, they were unwilling to recognize his excellence over the rabbi's and thus asked questions about his education and provenance.

The Pharisees and chief priests tried to capture Jesus

The Jews could do nothing against Jesus with arguments, so they considered forcibly removing Jesus. They wanted to catch him, but they were too scared. God protected Him because His hour had not yet come. The crowd was inclined to take Jesus' side. The Pharisees and chief priests sent temple guards to capture him, but they, too, stood listening to his words first.

Jesus then declared that He would only be with them for a little while for He was on his way to his Father who sent him. The Jews would seek Him but not find Him, for where He would be, they could not come. The Jews did not understand the meaning of Jesus' prophetic words. They scoffed and asked if He was going to leave the Jewish country to go to the Greek-speaking Jews in the dispersion or to the Greeks themselves? They didn't grasp how much truth was in their words, for the gospel of Christ was later preached throughout the Greek-speaking world.

The fountain of life

The last and greatest day of the festival has arrived. There was a large crowd at the temple early that morning. A group of priests, followed by a large group of people, took part in a procession to the fountain of Siloam.

One of the priests filled a golden jar with water, and then the procession returned to the temple with the golden jug. The trumpets blared while the priest poured the water on the altar. Then someone read from the scroll of

Isaiah¹⁶⁵. The water from the golden jug, for the Jews, symbolized the water from the rock in the desert.

When the water was being poured out on the altar, Jesus cried out that someone who thirsted should come to Him and drink! Jesus added that Scripture said that rivers of living water would flow from within Him¹⁶⁶. People who believe (who already drink from the true Fountain of salvation), would themselves become fountains, because the Holy Spirit makes such people a light and a blessing in the world.

Even the disciples did not understand when Jesus referred to the rivers of living water. His words were reminiscent of the prophecy of Isaiah¹⁶⁷ and he referred to the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of believers. Only after he was taken up in glory and the Holy Spirit was poured out did his disciples grasp his words.

The pride of the Pharisees

There came discord among the crowd about Jesus. Even the servants of the Pharisees who came to capture him were so impressed by his words that they didn't have the courage to catch him and thus the Pharisees angrily asked them why they had not yet brought him but the servants' defence was that no man had ever spoken like this. The Pharisees said that Jesus deceived them because there was no one among the rulers and the Pharisees (thus those with knowledge) who believed in Him. According to them, only the crowd who did not know the law adhered to Jesus, so they were cursed. The Pharisees were terribly haughty!

Among the members of the Sanhedrin there was one man, Nicodemus, who urged everyone to be cautious. He visited Jesus one night. He did not openly express his sympathy for Jesus, but pointed out that it was not lawful to

165 Isaiah 12: 3

166 John 4: 10

167 Isaiah 44: 3

“Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.”

“Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

“ For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;”

resort to violence until someone was charged and tried¹⁶⁸. Nevertheless, the recognized legal principles had to be upheld. However, the Jews would not listen to reason, and they insultingly yelled at Nicodemus as a Galilean. Did he not know, then, that Galilee had never produced a prophet? Their last claim was false. Jonah was from Galilee¹⁶⁹, possibly also Elijah, Hosea, and Nahum.

For people who supposedly campaigned for truth, truth was no longer of interest. They hated Jesus, and it dominated their thoughts and actions.

An adulteress faces the light of the world

The Lord spent the night on the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back in the temple, teaching the people, but then a group of Pharisees interrupted his teaching. They arrived with a woman who was caught in an act of adultery. They knew that the Lord Jesus was known as a friend of sinners, and they cunningly wanted to trap Him.

The Law of Moses decreed that an adulterous woman was to be stoned to death¹⁷⁰. They hypocritically stood in a circle around Jesus with the adulterous woman. They then informed Jesus that this woman had been caught in an act of adultery and that such women were to be stoned according to the Law of Moses, but what does He say? The Lord Jesus saw their cunning intent. He remained silent, crouched over and wrote with his finger on the ground. They thought he was cornered and insisted that He should answer them. The Lord Jesus straightened up and told them that the one that was without sin had to throw the first stone at her.

The law stipulated that when a person was stoned, the first witness to report the crime was also required to throw the first stone. Jesus made a minor modification by saying that the one who was without sin had to throw the first

168 Deuteronomy 1: 17 “Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighbouring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates.”

169 2 Kings 14: 25 “He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher.”

170 Deuteronomy 22: 22 “If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.”

stone¹⁷¹.

The Pharisees fell silent. Their conscience charged them and they silently disappeared one by one. The Lord Jesus, meanwhile, crouched down again. When he straightened up, all the Pharisees were gone. Just the woman was still standing there. He asked her where her accusers were. Did no one condemn her? No one condemned her. Jesus told her that He did not condemn her either. He sent her home with the admonishment not to sin anymore.

Jesus did not approve of the way of life of the woman or her deed, sin remains sin, but in His mercy He forgave her and gave her a new chance. However, there was one condition: she must no longer have sinned. She came to know Jesus as the One who forgives sin, and she had to start a new life, a life where she will no longer be dominated by sin.

Jesus the light of the world

Jesus tried to explain his divine mission to the Jews. However, the people would not accept his words and the Pharisees' and chief priests' resolve to take Him captive only grew stronger.

During the Feast of the Tabernacles, the temple court was illuminated at night, with large lamps, in order to remind the people of the pillar of fire (God's presence) that lit their way into the desert at night.

Jesus explained to them on that occasion that He is the Light of the world; and that whoever follows him surely does not walk in darkness, but has the light of life. Yet the Jews rejected Him as the light, saying He testified of Himself. Jesus therefore emphasized, "I bear witness. I know, I went out, and the Father and I bear witness about me." For everyone who knows God the Father, this should be sufficient proof. However, in spite of all their claims, the Jews did not know God the Father.

Abraham's children

The Jews persevered in their claim to be children of Abraham, believing that they were therefore also children of God. Yet Jesus pointed out to them

171 Deuteronomy 17: 7

"The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you."

that they were plotting to murder Him who was sent by the Father. The true children of Abraham would not have done such a thing. Abraham accepted the word of God as truth, and the true children of Abraham would also accept God's words as truth. The Jews rejected the word of God that Jesus spoke to them. Therefore, they were not children of Abraham, but of the devil, the father of lies¹⁷². The fact that they wanted to kill Him also proved that they were children of the devil, the murderer.

They attacked him with renewed anger in response: "Abraham and the prophets died, but how could he claim that whoever believes the word of Jesus would not taste death forever? Was He perhaps greater than Abraham, who is dead? Who does He make Himself out to be?" In this belittling reproach, Jesus identified the core problem of the Jews, namely that they did not believe the word of the Father.

Abraham acted differently. On the word of God, he looked forward to the day of fulfilment. With the birth of Isaac, the promised son, Abraham saw the fulfilment and rejoiced. It was indicative that God would fulfil all his promises. Isaac, the promised son, was the forerunner of the promised Messiah. Therefore, Abraham rejoiced in advance for the Son to come.

The Jews were outraged by his words and picked up stones to throw at him. Yet Jesus quietly passed between them without them doing anything to him and He left the temple.

A man born blind receives sight

Jesus and his disciples went to the temple on a Sabbath in Jerusalem. At one of the gates of the temple, they found a man who had been blind from birth. He may not have begged on the Sabbath, but perhaps someone would give him something unsolicited after all? The disciples were under the impression that sickness was a punishment for a particular sin and wanted to know from Jesus who had sinned, the man or his parents. They simply couldn't fathom why he was being punished for the sins of his parents. If, on the other hand, he was paying for his own sin, it didn't make sense either. He was blind from birth, thus before he could have committed any great sin.

Jesus replied that neither he nor his parents sinned. Jesus further pointed

172 1 John 3: 8

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

out that sickness or suffering is the fruit of sin, but not necessarily the penalty for it. The work of God had to be revealed in that blind man so that the Lord could be glorified. We also know that some sins have terrible consequences, but the Lord never punishes the believer for his sin because Jesus Christ bore the punishment completely¹⁷³.

In the life of the believer there may be hardship and difficulty and the purpose of this is to reveal the work of God. With this man, in particular, it would be revealed because Jesus would heal him. The Lord crouched down, spat on the ground, made clay of it, and smeared it on the eyes of the blind man. He then told the blind man to wash him with the water of Siloam. The man went and did so and that's when the miracle happened: he could see for the first time in his life!

The Pharisees and the blind man

When the man who used to be blind came home, his neighbours were in awe and they wanted to know how he could see? He told them everything. They brought him to the Pharisees, who again questioned him over his eyes and they wanted to know who had healed him? He told them everything. Some of the Pharisees claimed that Jesus did not come from God because He did not appear to be keeping the Sabbath while others said it was clearly the work of God. The Pharisees would not believe that the man was blind earlier and they called his parents. His parents testified that he was indeed blind from birth but when they were asked how he came to see, they declined to answer, because they feared being thrown out of the synagogue. It meant being pushed out of the Jewish community.

The Pharisees questioned the man who had previously been blind for a second time. They expected him to affirm that Jesus was a sinner. He refused to do so because a sinner cannot open the eyes of a blind man. He spoke to the Pharisees with boldness, because he found it strange that they did not know where the man came from who could open the eyes of a blind man. After all, they must have realized that God does not answer a sinner, but only someone who wants to do his will¹⁷⁴ and besides there was no one who has ever opened a blind eye in the history of Israel. Thus if Jesus were

173 Psalm 103: 8-10

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.”

174 1 John 2: 17

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

not send from God, He could not have done anything.

The blind came to faith

The Pharisees were angry with this man and banished him from the synagogue. The Lord Jesus met him again and then asked him if he believed in the Son of God. He asked Jesus who it was so that he could also believe in Him. Jesus replied that it was He who spoke with him. Then the man declared that he believed and he worshipped Jesus and in this way the blind man came to the Light of the world.

The Pharisees present understood that Jesus was referring to them when He spoke of the blind. They asked him bluntly if that was his intention. Jesus replied that if they were blind, they would have come to the Light. However, they pretended to be able to see, which is why they remained in the darkness of sin.

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20. Jesus in Jerusalem

Luke 10 up to Luke 11: 13 and John 10: 22 - 42

Jesus revealed his Father's will to us

God send his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to make His will known to all mankind. Jesus also explicitly submitted himself to his Father's will and obeyed his Father in everything. Jesus taught the people what his Father required of him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- We are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength.
- We are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.
- The Lord Jesus nurtures us like a shepherd does his flock.
- The Lord Jesus teaches us how to pray to our Father in heaven.

The great commandment

The Lord Jesus stayed in Jerusalem for a while after the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Pharisees did not forget his pronouncement that they wear blinkers and were living in sin. After all, this meant that those who kept the law so exemplarily would not inherit eternal life and this was inconceivable to them, therefore they wanted to ask Jesus more about that.

A short time after that, a certain lawyer got the chance to ask Jesus questions. The lawyer stood up while Jesus was teaching the people, and he asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. He thought that he knew the answer and that he was really just testing Jesus with the question. The lawyer and especially the Pharisees thought that man had to do everything himself to inherit eternal life. According to them, men had to earn eternal life by doing everything the law says and in their own opinion the law scholars and Pharisees did keep the law and that is why they could not understand that by the grace of God, the elite would get eternal life¹⁷⁵.

Jesus knew the heart of that man and knew he already had his own answer

175 Ephesians 2: 8

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”

to that question. He just wanted to find out if Jesus would give the same answer, and because Jesus knew lawyer's heart, He asked the lawyer what was written in the law. The lawyer quoted two passages.

The first came from the daily prayer of the Jews and therefore everyone knew full well that you had to love God above everything and everyone¹⁷⁶. The second appeared in another part of the law, namely that you had to love your neighbour as yourself¹⁷⁷. Jesus agreed with him and told him to go do it.

No person can keep the law

The Lord Jesus explained that when a person wanted to earn eternal life by obeying the Law, he had to obey all the commandments. It narrows down to the fact that when you transgress on one commandment, you also transgress on all the other commandments and are therefore guilty of all the commandments. Those who imagined they were obeying the whole law were not honest with themselves. The lawyer in question would soon discover that it was impossible to keep all the laws. Man cannot keep the law by himself; he is completely dependent on God's grace. This means that all people must seek the Messiah, Jesus Christ, because He is the only true way to eternal life.

However, the lawyer in question was not yet satisfied. He was looking for a way out and wanted to know from Jesus who his neighbour was. The lawyers talked about this question a lot. Most of them (the Jews) thought that a gentile or a Samaritan could never be one's neighbour that is why the Jews hated them. The Lord Jesus answered his question with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The parable of the good Samaritan

A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. The road meandered down the mountain to the bottom of the Jordan Valley and went from there to Jericho. Many a time robbers hid on the mountain, attacked and sometimes even killed the travellers. That is why people travelled in groups between these two cities. Unfortunately this Jewish man travelled alone and was

176 Deuteronomy 6: 5

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength,”

177 Leviticus 19: 18

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.”

assaulted and beaten by the robbers. The robbers then left the injured man for dead and left.

A priest came along that road and when he saw the injured man, he deliberately passed on the other side to avoid the injured man. A Levite (a man who had been segregated in the service of the temple) later passed by the injured man. His term of service was completed and he was on his way back to his home. He did not want to make himself unclean by touching the injured man, nor was he under any obligation to provide any service outside the temple. As a result, without any sympathy, he passed that man as well.

A certain Samaritan also travelling came across the injured man. He felt very sorry for the man when he saw him, so he went to him. He bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine on them. He helped the wounded man on his own pack animal, took him to an inn, and cared for him there. He left the next morning, but before he went, he took out two silver coins (Denarius / denarii / an ancient Roman coin) and gave them to the owner of the inn. He asked the innkeeper to take care of the injured man and assured him that he would pay any extra costs upon his return.

Jesus asked the lawyer, which of those three was the injured man's neighbour. The lawyer replied it was the one who showed him mercy. Then Jesus told him to do likewise.

Jesus intentionally designated the Samaritan as the man who acted correctly and did something good for someone else. He wanted to make it clear that a neighbour was not to be sought only among compatriots and that love service was not limited to one's own people. God's commandment extends across all boundaries.

Mary and Martha

The Lord Jesus arrived in Bethany (a small town just outside Jerusalem) one day. Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, lived there. All three believed in the Lord Jesus and they loved Him. The Lord Jesus went to their home, where they received Him with gladness. Martha welcomed Him at the door and made Him feel at home. Her sister Mary was just as happy to see Jesus. After the guests made themselves at home, Jesus began to talk about deeper things. Mary sat at his feet and listened, however Martha couldn't find the time to sit and listen. She had too much to do because she still had to prepare food for all the guests.

There was a vast difference in character between the two sisters. Martha was the busy housewife who worried about her guests. She wanted to serve them the best she had to offer and as a result stayed busy preparing the meal. For Mary, it was more important to listen to Jesus and learn about Him. As a result, tension prevailed between the sisters. Martha was especially unhappy because her sister sat and listened so quietly to Jesus, while she had to do the work all alone. She finally asked the Lord Jesus if it didn't bother Him that her sister was leaving it up to her alone, to serve everyone. She wanted Jesus to commission Mary to help her.

She also wanted to make sure that the Lord saw how much she was doing for Him and that Mary did nothing. However, the Lord Jesus did not praise her. He told her that she was concerned and agitated about many things, but Mary preferred the good part, which was to learn about Jesus. Jesus wanted Martha to see that all that effort was unnecessary. The Lord did not come to have a nice dinner, but to give something: He gave them the gospel. Mary listened and learned about the things of eternal life, while Martha unnecessarily occupied herself with less important things.

The Shepherd and the sheep

The Lord Jesus preached about the kingdom of heaven at the beginning of his public appearance. Towards the end, He spoke primarily of Himself as the Messiah; the One in whom the kingdom of heaven came near men. The Lord used the parable of the good shepherd and his sheep to explain the relationship between Him and His followers.

At that time, the people knew exactly what important work a shepherd did. Each shepherd had his flock of sheep, with which he moved around in the fields during the day. Towards evening he led his flock of sheep to a fold in the field. He stood at the door of the fold and let them pass through into the fold one by one, under his staff. In this way he counted the sheep and he checked to see if they didn't have sore spots.

At that time, different flocks of sheep slept in the same fold. The next morning, the doorkeeper allowed the shepherds to go in and lead their own sheep from the fold. The shepherd even gave each sheep a name. When a sheep heard his shepherd calling his name, he listened and followed his shepherd. They never followed a strange shepherd.

Through this parable the Lord Jesus assured them that the one who did

not enter through the door of the fold, but entered from another side, was a thief and a robber. The sheep would flee from him because they didn't know his voice. The true sheep (chosen ones) will know the voice of the Good Shepherd (Jesus Christ) and they will follow Him.

Jesus the true Shepherd

The Jews did not understand this parable and the Lord Jesus then further explained and explicitly stated that He is the door (entrance) of the sheep; anyone who enters through Him will be saved. We come into the kingdom of heaven through Jesus alone because He suffered for us and died on the cross, thus paying for our sins. Therefore he is the door of the sheepfold through which we, his sheep, must pass.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus bluntly told them that He is the good shepherd¹⁷⁸. All who came before him were thieves and robbers, and the sheep did not listen to them. The thief came only to steal, slaughter and destroy. Yet the good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep.

Jesus (the good shepherd) came so that the believers (his sheep) might have life in abundance. The hireling and those who are not shepherds flee when a wolf arrives and thus leaves the sheep unprotected. The wolf then catches the sheep and chases them apart. Jesus declared that He was the good shepherd and that He knows His own sheep and they also know Him.

Jesus then told of his imminent death. He laid down his life for his sheep. He wasn't obligated to do it; he did it voluntarily because it was his Father's will, and therefore he rose from the dead. The Lord Jesus obeyed his Father in everything.

Jesus prophetically saw the growth of the church across the borders of Israel. He said that He also had other sheep that were not from that fold. He also had to lead and bring them in, so they could all become one flock with one shepherd. He has sheep among all the nations of the world. The Lord Jesus clearly stated that He laid down His life not only for the Jews, but also for the gentiles (they were the other sheep that were not of that fold).

Again the Jews were divided over Jesus's words. Some openly claimed that He was possessed by the devil and insane and that they would no longer

178 1 Peter 5: 4

“and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

listen to Him, while others reasoned that his words were not those of a maniac and also that a devil could not open the eyes of a blind man. This discord made the Pharisees just more hostile towards Jesus.

The feast of dedication

During the Feast of Dedication, the Jews commemorated the event when Judas Maccabeus cleansed the Temple after expelling the Syrians from the land. During the festival in Jerusalem, the people gathered around Jesus in Solomon's pillared corridor. The Jews wanted him to tell them candidly whether he was the Christ or not. Jesus answered them that he had already told them this in the parable of the good shepherd, but that they did not believe him. He also performed his miracles in his Father's name, but they still didn't believe him, because they weren't among his sheep. His sheep listened to his voice; He knew them and they followed him. Jesus gave them eternal life, they would never perish, and no one could snatch them out of His hand because He and the Father are one.

The Jews understood that He meant that He was the Son of God and that they did not want to acknowledge Him as God's son because they were not of His sheep. They were outraged by this and picked up stones to throw at him. The Lord Jesus wanted to know from them over which one of the good deeds he had done amongst them, they wanted to stone him. The Jews replied that they wanted to stone Him because He was blasphemous. He, who was a man, according to them pretended to be God too. The Jews were right to say that a person who calls himself God is a blasphemer, but Jesus was not just an ordinary man, He was simultaneously and also truly God, therefore He could have called Himself God.

Jesus in Bethany

Jesus said goodbye to Jerusalem and went to Jericho and from there to Perea. This was a part of the territory where Herod Antipas ruled. Jesus went to Bethabara, where John the Baptist had previously worked. Jesus Himself began His ministry there after being baptized by John. He returned to that place and probably spent all of January there.

Many people listened to Jesus. They knew John and realized that He spoke the truth after all, even though He didn't do the wonders as proof that He was a prophet. The work that Jesus did and Jesus's preaching proved that the words of John were true. Many believed in Jesus so they formed a large circle of followers there.

The Model Prayer

The Lord Jesus was praying somewhere. When he was finished, his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, just as John had taught his disciples. At that time, it was significant that the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. The longer they were with Him, the more they realized that they actually knew and understood very little.

It is still the case that the closer one lives to the Lord, the more one understands one's own smallness and inability. Then you always ask with greater longing for the Lord to teach you more. On the other hand, the Lord does not reproach you for knowing so little. The Lord fulfilled their request and taught them the Lord's Prayer; but He did not intend that they should always pray only the Lord's Prayer, just that it would serve as an example to them.

The Lord then told a parable to emphasize how much our heavenly Father wants to answer our prayers. Jesus told them that if someone receives unexpected visitors at night, he would go and knock at his friend's house to ask for bread for his visitors. If the friend and his family are already in bed, he will still get up and give him everything he needs because his friend is not ashamed to keep asking. The Lord Jesus emphasized what He had already said in the Sermon on the Mount: Pray, and it will be given to you¹⁷⁹. In this way we can approach God in prayer with great openness and express our need to Him.

With another comparison from daily life, Jesus emphasized that we can pray with great boldness. There isn't a father who would give his son a stone if he asked for bread, or a snake instead of a fish, or a scorpion if he asked for an egg and therefore if we who are evil because of our sins, know to give our children good things, how much more so does God our heavenly Father? He will bestow good things on his children who ask him. He will especially bestow upon them the Holy Spirit, the best of all good gifts, who pray to Him without ceasing.

179 Matthew 7: 7-11

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

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21. Jesus's teachings in Judea

Luke 11: 37 up to Luke 14: 35

Only God should be served

There is only one God and He is a jealous God. We are to serve and worship Him in obedience and only Him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Wealth is not found in earthly possessions, we can only find wealth in God.
- The Lord calls us to repentance of our sins.
- We must obey God's calling for our lives.

The meal at the Pharisee

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him. The Pharisee was astonished when Jesus did not wash his hands before dinner, at which point Jesus then spoke out sharply against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and lawyers. Not realizing how full of sin they were in themselves, the Pharisees were concerned only with outward appearances and even though they washed the outside of the cups and plates clean, their insides were dirty, greedy, mean, and evil. They thought that if they distributed money to the poor, everything was fine. With great care they gave their tithes of all kinds of vegetables from their gardens, but at the same time they were unfair to other people. They did not have any love unto God. In the synagogue they sat in the front places and at the markets they stood where everyone could greet them reverently.

The lawyers felt offended by Jesus' statements for He addressed them with a "woe to you!" and warned that misery awaited them. Jesus accused them of laying heavy burdens on people that they did not apply to themselves. They were just as bad as their fathers who killed the prophets. Together with their fathers, they were guilty of the blood of the prophets, and God would demand an account of them¹⁸⁰.

180 Revelation 16: 5-6

"And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."

The lawyers were supposed to teach the people so that they could understand the law of God correctly, but unfortunately, they themselves did not understand the intent of the law and they prevented those who tried to understand the law. The Pharisees tried even harder to ask him catchy questions just so that they could find something to accuse him of.

The people gathered around Jesus in thousands to hear what he wanted to teach them. Jesus, while everyone could hear him, warned the disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees. There was a great risk that some of Jesus' followers wore masks to cover their true inner self, but it would be in vain because all that is hidden will once be uncovered¹⁸¹.

The parable of the rich fool

Jesus' name was very well known in the vicinity of Bethabara at that time. A man came there one day and asked Jesus to talk his brother into sharing his inheritance with him. The greedy man saw that Jesus had immense sway over people and wanted Jesus to use this authority to his advantage.

Jesus indignantly rejected His request, for He did not come to act as judge in all sorts of disputes; after all there were Jewish judges for that. Whoever wanted to involve Jesus in an earthly legal battle did not grasp that He was on a heavenly mission. It was clear that this man just wanted to enrich himself from the inheritance. Jesus warned his followers to guard against greed. Jesus did not measure the value of a person's life by his wealth. He then told the parable of the rich fool to explain this truth.

A rich man had such a great harvest, that he had no room in any of his barns in which to store his crops. He then decided to demolish the barns he have and then to build larger barns so that he could store his entire crop as well as all his goods in them. He then thought that he would have enough for many years to come and thus he would no longer need to work that hard. He wanted to live peacefully and enjoy his wealth. In God's eyes, he was a fool; he died that night. Everything he gathered, he had to leave behind. This is the result of all who gather earthly treasures and not heavenly treasures with God.

181 Colossians 1: 26-27

“the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The Lord warned people not to worry about the temporary needs of life. He repeated what He had already said in Galilee, so the people could learn to cast all their worries onto God and to trust completely in God. In other words in our lives we have to rely on God alone¹⁸².

The necessity of repentance

Jesus was in Bethabara talking about the signs of the times, when people informed him of an appalling disaster. Galileans offered sacrifices in the temple and by order of Pilate the soldiers beat them to death during that holy act! According to eyewitnesses, the Galileans' blood mixed with the blood of their sacrificial animals. They then wanted to know from Jesus whether those Galileans were greater sinners than other men were or whether it was the punishment of God.

Jesus explained that the victims were definitely not greater sinners. He said that calamities are warning signs of the coming judgment of God upon the people. Everyone was sinners who had to repent, including those who stood by Him and listened to his words. If they did not repent, God would strike them with eternal judgment¹⁸³. This means that we cannot point the finger at others, but rather aim it at ourselves.

The parable of the barren fig tree

Jesus told the parable of the barren fig tree to make the necessity of repentance even clearer.

A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard and when he looked for fruit on it, he found nothing. He instructed the gardener to cut the tree out, as this was already the third year that the tree had not borne fruit. The gardener pleaded with the man to let the tree stand for another year. He undertook to take care of the tree in the hope that it would bear fruit the following year and should the tree still not bear fruit after a year, he would cut the tree down.

Jesus warned that the people had to repent before it was too late. He would

182 2 Corinthians 1: 9-10 “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and [a]does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,”

183 Revelation 16: 5 “And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.”

still devote attention to them, but if they did not repent, he would surely cut them out. From history we learn that later God rejected them as His people.

Healing a lame (impaired) woman

The Lord Jesus saw in the synagogue on the Sabbath a woman who had been ill for eighteen years. She was bent double and crumpled up, unable to stand up straight. Jesus called out to her and laid his hands on her, and He told her that she was healed. She immediately stood up straight and praised God. The ruler of the synagogue was angry and told the people that there are six days on which one may work and heal people, but one may not do so on the Sabbath day.

Jesus didn't leave the matter there. He spoke sternly to the ruler, calling him a hypocrite. Jesus pointed out to him that each of them would release his ox or donkey that was stuck to the manger on the Sabbath to drink water. Here was a woman and she was worth so much more than an ox! She had been sick for eighteen years, so why couldn't he give her at least the same treatment they showed to their animals on the Sabbath. His opponents felt ashamed, and the crowd rejoiced at what He had done.

The narrow way

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, teaching people everywhere. Someone then asked Jesus if those being saved were few? Jesus didn't answer this question because it wasn't something we should concern ourselves with. The person who asked the question should have focused on himself instead, he should make sure that he is entering through the narrow gate (or narrow door) himself. Therefore this question of whether you are saved is of much greater and more personal importance. You have to pay serious attention to yourself and fight hard to enter through the narrow gate. We receive eternal life by faith alone and the result of it is this hard effort, which is the total suppression of oneself.

Jesus used metaphorical language (imagery) to explain this. He presented it in the following way; there is a great feast in which God is the host. At the specified time, the door is closed and locked. The latecomers will knock and ask the Lord to open up, but He will answer that He does not know them and that He does not know where they came from. They will then say that they ate and drank in his presence and were present when he taught them on the streets. Yet he will maintain that he does not know them and, as workers of

injustice, command them to leave. Then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Yes, the gate through which we enter into the kingdom of heaven is narrow, very narrow! It requires us to crucify ourselves and ask for the will of the Lord alone¹⁸⁴. We can only do this through the regeneration that God, graciously through his Spirit, works in us.

The Pharisees warned Jesus against Herod

On the same day Jesus received word that Lazarus was sick. Some Pharisees also warned Him that Herod wanted to kill Him and that He should rather leave, as soon as possible. He was then in Perea, where Herod was the tetrarch and he had already had John the Baptist beheaded, but by that time Herod was afraid that Jesus was actually John who had come back from the dead and wanted to avenge him on his murderer. Herod also knew that the people in Galilee wanted to make Jesus king, and therefore the warning to Jesus was based on sound reasons.

Jesus told them: "Go and tell that fox (Herod) Behold, I cast out demons and heal, today and tomorrow, and on the third day I am finished. But I have to move on today and tomorrow and the next day, because it cannot happen that a prophet perishes outside Jerusalem." The thought of Jerusalem stoning the prophets made Jesus sad.

Jesus worked there many times, but his preaching brought no change in the attitude of the inhabitants. The city was the mother of the people and Jesus tried to gather her children just like a hen gathered her chicks under her wings, but they would not gather together¹⁸⁵.

The inhabitants of the city refused to repent, and therefore it was struck by the judgment of God. The Romans destroyed the temple in the year 70 AD.

184 1 Timothy 6: 12

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

185 Psalms 122: 3-5

"Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together, Where the tribes go up, The tribes of the LORD, To the Testimony of Israel, To give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgement, The thrones of the house of David."

A man with dropsy healed on the Sabbath

On a Sabbath day, Jesus went to the house of a prominent Pharisee to eat there. The man did not invite Jesus out of kindness. He invited Him to keep an eye on Jesus, because there were Pharisees still trying to find something against him.

In the house of this Pharisee there was a man who suffered from dropsy (Oedema / Edema). Jesus then asked the lawyers and Pharisees if one could heal someone on the Sabbath. They were supposed to know and interpret the law. Therefore, they should have known what could and could not be done and yet they refused to answer Jesus.

The Lord Jesus healed the man and sent him home. He then asked them: "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" They didn't reply to that. Their silence spoke louder than words and their hostility towards Jesus was crystal clear.

The invited and the best places

When the guests sat down at the table, there was a remarkable competition among them to get the places of honour. Some were displeased about the place they were seated because the seating place did not rank high enough. The Pharisees were very sensitive about their own honour and social status (ranking). Jesus noticed this and admonished them rather to take the back seat in case a more important person was invited. He explained that it would be a great embarrassment, if the host had to ask you to move backwards. By that the Lord meant that one should always be willing to be the least.

Jesus advised the host not to invite his friends and relatives, but rather the poor, the maimed, the crippled and the blind to his meal because they could not compensate him for it at all. It would make him happy and one day with the resurrection from the dead, he would be compensated for it. The Lord Jesus also gave us a general principle to do good to other people, without expecting anything in return¹⁸⁶.

186 Galatians 6: 9-10

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The parable of the Great Supper

One of the guests, who were at the table with Jesus, wanted to show how pious he was and made the remark that the one who eats bread in the kingdom of God, is blessed. Jesus responded to this remark with a parable.

A man gave a big meal and invited many people. When the meal was ready, he sent his servant to the all the people he invited to tell them that everything was ready and that they should come, but everyone had an excuse for why they could not attend this supper. One bought a piece of land, which he urgently needed to check on. Another bought five pairs of oxen and wanted to work with them. A third one made an apology, because he was just married and thus would not be able to attend. So all the invitees had excuses, but actually they just didn't want to attend this great supper. The host was very angry when he heard this and told his servant to go out in the city, into the streets and aisles and invite the poor, the maimed and the crippled and the blind to the meal. When there was room left, he sent the servant out again to invite more people so that the hall could be filled.

This parable referred to the Jews who were invited by God to believe in His Son, but when they made all kinds of excuses and did not want to acknowledge Jesus, He sent His servants, the apostles and missionaries to the gentiles and invited them¹⁸⁷. Today we are the invitees invited to the Lord's great supper and we are not allowed to make excuses. We have no reason to refuse when the Lord calls us, but we do have reason to accept and go right away. It is a great privilege, which God gives to us through His grace, and we must gladly accept this! However, God rejects the people who do not accept the invitation.

The demands of discipleship

Jesus continued his journey from Perea to Bethany. Many people have followed him, yet they have not yet properly pondered the demands of discipleship. They actually followed Jesus out of interest or curiosity. Jesus wanted them to realize that true imitation meant self-denial, struggle, humiliation, and persecution of "the self". The people had to realize this and then decide if they wanted to follow Him further.

187 Acts 13: 46-47

"Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

Jesus gathered them together and again explained to them the demands of discipleship. He pointed out to them that if you want to follow Him, you must be willing to break ties with your family and carry your cross. It will require sacrifice¹⁸⁸. So everyone must first seriously think about whether he is willing to do so, like someone who wants to build a tower and does a cost calculation first, before starting to build the tower. After all, no one wants to be mocked by his neighbours for not having the money to complete the tower. Similarly, a king would also first determine if his army was strong enough to win over the enemy before engaging in a war. If he didn't have enough soldiers, he would negotiate for peace instead.

Likewise, anyone who wants to follow Jesus must first consider the requirements. They should not be like salt that has become tasteless. Salt like that is not good for anything and will be thrown away¹⁸⁹.

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188 2 Timothy 3: 12

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

189 Matthew 5: 13

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

22. Jesus's last appearances

Luke 15 up to Luke 17 and John 11: 1 - 57

Jesus came to redeem the world from sin

Every person sins and that is why we need a saviour to save us from our sinful existence. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- We should rejoice, together with the angels when someone converts to Christianity.
- Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.
- The kingdom of the Lord already came.

The Pharisees and the tax collectors

The tax collectors and sinners eagerly listened to the Lord Jesus. He also ate with them, something the Pharisees and scribes seriously objected to. They were of the opinion that fellowship with tax collectors and sinners made a person unclean. Consequently, they wanted nothing to do with any sinner or tax collector, for they (the Pharisees) kept the law¹⁹⁰. They had already taken that point of view earlier and had adamantly stuck to it.

In those circumstances, Jesus told three parables that together form a unity: the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the prodigal son.

All three parables have a clear message, namely that God saves the sinners whom He wants to save and that we should rejoice about that. The principle is that God abhors sin and will not let it go unpunished. Repentance occurs when sinners are saved through faith in Christ. The Lord Jesus clearly indicated to the Pharisees that God is pleased when a sinner repents. Pharisees and scribes, who consider themselves friends of God, should therefore also rejoice when a sinner repents.

190 1 John 1: 8

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

The parable of the lost sheep

The Lord Jesus told the parable of the stray sheep on another occasion, and He told it once again on this occasion. In this parable, Jesus emphasized that it is not the will of the Father for one of His children to perish.

The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that if a person has a hundred sheep and one of them runs away, he will leave the ninety-nine in the field to find the one who is gone and he will search until he finds that sheep again. He will then return home with the stray sheep. At home, he will share his joy with his friends and neighbours because he found his lost sheep. Jesus then explained to the people that there is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents, rather than over ninety-nine righteous ones who did not need repentance.

Jesus told the tax collectors and sinners that there was salvation for them; they had to repent which could only happen through the grace of God. Jesus told the Pharisees that they should rejoice for every sinner who is saved. He also warned them that they saddened God in heaven because they think they do not need repentance themselves.

The parable of the lost coin

The Lord Jesus told the following parable about the life of a woman who struggled to make ends meet while maintaining her home. Every piece of money, however small in value, was of significance and she saved it with care. That woman saved ten coins and then discovered that one had gone missing. However, she realized that it had to be in the house somewhere. She took a broom and a lamp and turned down the house, swiped the floor and searched until she found the coin. In that search this one coin gained more value for her than the nine other coins.

Immediately after locating the lost coin, she called the neighbours and told them what had happened. They were glad with her that she had found the lost coin again. Jesus then explained that the angels of God also rejoice when a sinner repents.

The message of the parable was that if a sinner were like a lost coin - dead in sin - God would nevertheless seek him to get him back. The righteous, who have not run away, must then rejoice in heaven with the angels, when that sinner repents and is no longer lost.

The parable of the lost son

The Pharisees and scribes constantly accused Jesus of receiving sinners and eating with them. In their opinion, a Jewish rabbi (a religious teacher) of Israel should have despised the fallen instead. However, Jesus Christ made it clear that the Son of Man came to seek and save those who were lost. Jesus wanted the Pharisees and scribes to understand the message that God rejoices every time a sinner repents.

He told another parable to emphasize this: A man had two sons. The older the youngest son got, the more dissatisfied he became, because in his father's house, he was less important than his older brother was. He was so unhappy that one day he asked his father to give him his share of the inheritance so that he could leave. The father complied with his request.

The youngest son soon took his things and left for a foreign country. There he lived an immoral life, wasting all his money and possessions. When he had nothing left, a great famine came upon the land and he began to suffer. He was completely famished from hunger. He then went to work for one of the citizens of the country. His job was to feed the pigs. He was so hungry that he wanted to eat some of the pigs' pods, but he was not allowed to do so. In those terribly difficult circumstances, he repented. He pondered and realized how bad his life was. He told himself that his father had many labourers and that they had more than enough to eat, while he starved from hunger. He decided to go back to his father and tell him that he had sinned against heaven and against him and that he was no longer worthy of being called his son. He had to do with him as he did with his labourers. He then left for his father's house.

His father saw him coming and felt very sorry for him. He ran to him, hugged him and kissed him warmly. His son told him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you and I am no longer worthy to be your son." His father did not even answer him, but told his servants to bring the best clothes and put them on him, a ring for his hand and shoes for his feet. They slaughtered and ate the fattened calf. The father rejoiced, for his son was dead, but came back to life; he was lost, but found again!

Jesus made it clear that our heavenly Father rejoices just as much when one stray son or daughter returns to Him. After all, God makes himself known to

us as our heavenly Father who cares for his children¹⁹¹.

The oldest son

The eldest son was in the fields with his father's livestock when his younger brother returned. He didn't go home until later in the day. He heard the music and singing from afar and saw the festive activities at home. He did not approach, but called a servant and asked him what was going on. The servant was excited and told the oldest son that his brother had come home and that his father was celebrating out of gratitude. The eldest son was immediately angry and refused to go any closer.

The father then went out himself and begged his oldest son to come in, but the son refused, expressing his anger. He had served his father faithfully for so many years and his father had never prepared a feast for him! Nevertheless, he holds a big feast for the runaway who threw away his money and his life. The eldest son continued to reproach his father. However, the father remained calm, explaining to the eldest that he was always with him and that everything belonged to him too, because he was the only heir.

The youngest has already gotten his share. The father told him: "We must be merry and glad, for this brother of yours was dead and came back to life, for he was lost but now he's found."

The Pharisees were intelligent enough to realize that this part of the parable referred to them because they had taken the attitude of the eldest son. Just like the older brother, they refused to have anything to do with the tax collectors and sinners, even though the tax collectors and sinners were converted and even though they were saved from eternal death. They didn't want to hear that the Father in heaven rejoices over every sinner who is saved. Therefore, the Pharisees stood outside by choice, because they did not want to share in the heavenly feast.

The illness of Lazarus

A man named Lazarus was sick. He and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in the town of Bethany. Mary was the woman who anointed the Lord with

191 Deuteronomy 11: 11-12 "but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year."

scented oil and dried his feet with her hair. Jesus came to their home a lot when he was around for He truly loved the siblings. While Jesus was in Bethabara, the sisters sent a message to Him to let Him know that Lazarus was seriously ill. The intention was for Him to immediately come to them and then to restore Lazarus to health. However, Jesus told his disciples that the sickness would not lead to death, but that the disease would serve to glorify God and the Son of God. Jesus therefore waited two more days before He left to go to them.

After those two days, Jesus told his disciples that they needed to go to Judea again. The disciples would not because they were concerned about his safety. The Jews at the feast of the temple dedication almost stoned Him!

Jesus assured his disciples that Lazarus was just sleeping and that he had to go to wake him up. His disciples didn't understand, so he bluntly told them, "Lazarus is dead." He, the Son of God, knew this without anyone telling him. Lazarus' death, however, would not be the end. After all, God has power over death¹⁹². Thomas then encouraged the other disciples to go with Jesus and they left for Bethany.

The death of Lazarus

One could easily travel from Bethabara to Bethany in one day, but Jesus was in no hurry and preached on the way there, working wonders. Upon arrival in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days and had already been buried. The inhabitants of Bethany knew Jesus, and the news of his coming soon reached Martha and Mary. Martha hurriedly got up and went to him. Mary, however, remained seated in the house.

When Martha came to Him, she reproached Jesus and told Him that her brother would not have died if He had been there. The Lord told her that her brother would still rise. She accepted it because she believed that Jesus was referring to the resurrection of the last day. Jesus then told her: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even if he dies."

Martha replied to his question that she believed this and added that she believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, who would come into the world.

192 Hosea 13:14

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

After saying this, she went home and told Mary that the Master was calling her. Mary went to the Lord and fell down before Him, declaring that her brother would not have died if He had been there. When Jesus saw her and the Jews weeping, He also became very sad and He wept with them.

They went to show Jesus where they had buried Lazarus, and at the tomb He became upset again. The tomb was a cave and a large stone closed the tomb opening. Jesus asked them to take the stone away, but Martha said that her brother had been dead for four days and that his body had already begun to smell bad. Jesus comforted her, saying that if she believed, she would see the glory of God. They then rolled the stone away from the front of the tomb.

Jesus looked up to heaven after the tomb was opened and prayed. In his short prayer, he thanked the Father for answering his prayer. He told the crowd what would happen next so that they would realize God sent him.

Jesus called in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus came out at Jesus' command. His hands and feet were still tied in burial cloths and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them to untie him. Jesus was the victor over death. His words were confirmed: "I am the resurrection and the life."

The plot to kill Jesus

The raising of Lazarus caused a great stir amongst the Jews with the result that many believed in Jesus from then on. The Pharisees also heard about the events and convened with the Jewish Council (or Sanhedrin) to discuss it. They didn't know what to do. Jesus performed many signs, and they feared that all the people would eventually believe in him. This could lead to rebellion and they feared the Roman authorities.

The Pharisees felt that they had to do something drastic to maintain their authority and prestige. Caiaphas, the high priest, suggested that it would be better if only one man died for the people instead of letting the whole nation perish. As a result, they planned to remove Jesus. The words of Caiaphas also had a deeper meaning without him realizing it because God used Caiaphas to speak a prophetic word. Jesus had to die for all the people, but He would not die only for Israel, but also for the elect amongst all the nations of the world.

On that day, the Jewish Council decided that Jesus had to die. They had no

charge against him, nor were there any trial, but the decision was made.

Jesus' suffering has not yet come. However, He no longer appeared so openly in public, but He withdrew to Ephraim, a lonely village in northern Judea.

The parable of the unjust steward

Jesus told his disciples a parable again at that time. A rich man had a manager, but then he learned that this manager was spending and wasting his things (goods). He called the manager and fired him for making the tenants pay too much, acting too harshly and being too strict towards them. In addition to all this he also kept some of the high rents for himself, the tenants therefore accused the manager with his lord (the rich man) about it. The rich man wanted to see the financial books and the manager went to his office to fetch them and present them to him.

The sacked manager, in a desperate attempt, realized that he could use his managership for one last time to win the favour of his lord's debtors. He therefore called the debtors and asked each of them how much he owed. The first owed a hundred barrels of oil. The manager brought the acknowledgement of debt (IOU) out and allowed him to change the figure from one hundred to fifty. The next one owed a hundred muid (bags) of wheat, but he was able to reduce it to eighty. Therefore, he went down the line. All those people suddenly turned into friends of the manager and they were full of praise for his actions.

What that manager did was to reduce the amounts of the actual debt on the promissory notes (IOU's) in a sincere way. By that act he won the debtors' good attitude. They would receive him in their homes after he lost his job. In this way he gained the favour of the debtors as well as the praise from his employer for the clever thing he did. The people of the world act smarter among themselves than the people of light!

In this parable, the Lord Jesus admonished his disciples to work honestly and wisely with money, while they still had the opportunity. They would not only make friends on earth, but would also be received full of joy into heaven. The Lord further warned that money could put one before difficult temptations. Whoever is honest with the money he has to control will also be appointed over the "true good."

The rich man and Lazarus

The Lord Jesus told another parable. There was a rich man who wore purple and fine linen clothes; he lived cheerfully and in luxury every day. At his gate lay a poor beggar named Lazarus. He was full of boils and the dogs were licking at his boils. He longed for the crumbs falling off the rich man's table, but the rich man did not think of giving it to him.

When the beggar died, angels carried him away to Abraham in heaven. The rich man also died, but he ended up in hellish sorrows. In his misery he saw Abraham and Lazarus from afar. He called to Abraham and asked him to send Lazarus to put the tip of his finger into the water to wet his tongue, for he had suffered greatly in the flames. Abraham answered him that during his lifetime he had received good things, and Lazarus received the bad. Lazarus was comforted in heaven, but the rich man had to suffer, and besides Lazarus couldn't get to him because there was a great big gulf between them.

The rich man then asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers that they would not also end up in the place of suffering. Again Abraham refused, for the rich man's brothers had the words of Moses and the prophets to read. The rich man insisted, because he believed that if anyone from the dead went to them, they would repent. Yet Abraham told him that his brothers would not listen even if someone from the dead went to them.

The Lord has given us his Word and we need to listen to it. Only through the Word of God that the Spirit works in us can we come to repentance.

We also learn from this parable more about what will happen to us after death. After death, there is an immediate separation between the believers and the unbelievers. One group goes in Hades to the place of sorrows and the other to the place of bliss.

Love, faith, and service

As a good teacher, Jesus repeated certain things so that people would learn and remember them. The first was the duty to love each other¹⁹³. Furthermore, no one had to stand in the way of someone who wanted to come to Jesus. Anyone who would make someone stumble, who was still weak in faith, should rather be thrown into the sea with a millstone around his neck.

193 1 John 3: 11

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,"

Nor should we ever tire of forgiving one another. If your brother sins against you seventy times seven in a day and comes to apologize each time, you must forgive him again and again.

The coming of the kingdom

The Pharisees came to Jesus while he was around Ephraim and they questioned Him about the Second Coming. He answered them that the kingdom would not come with outward signs. You don't have to look anxiously about, scanning the happenings around you, because the kingdom of God was already within every believer.

This means that the kingdom of God is already here and yet it is still coming, when the Son of Man will one day return on the clouds. The disciples had to realize that hard times lay ahead of them. They would wish it had already come, for many false messiahs would come, to lure the people after them¹⁹⁴. No one will be able to calculate the date and that day will come like lightning - unexpected and unpredictable, but everyone will immediately know about it.

Recommended reading

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GROENEWALD, E.P. 1968. *Handboek Bybelse geskiedenis: Die Nuwe Testament*. Pretoria: DBU. 299 - 310 p.

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194 1 John 4: 1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

23. Jesus depart to Jerusalem

**Luke 17: 11 up to Luke 18:17; Luke 19: 1 – 27
and Matthew 19 up to Matthew 20**

The Lord demands true faith

True faith is a firm knowledge and complete faith that a person's salvation only comes from Jesus Christ. The result of true faith is obedience to God, and this demand to obey follows from God's promise. True faith and obedience are therefore inseparable from one another and thus believers must do what God demands of us in and through His Word. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God's children know, confess and repent their sins.
- Together with the angels we should rejoice when someone convert to Christianity.
- As a believer you have to take up your cross and follow Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes and ears so that we are able to hear and obey God's will.

The Parable of the persistent widow

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they should constantly pray to their Father who is in heaven. Jesus warned that believers, in the hard times before His second coming, should pray without ceasing.

One should pray constantly and not be discouraged. Jesus explained this by means of a parable. There was an unjust judge in the city that did not fear God nor was he in awe of any human being. In the same city a widow constantly came to him and asked him to help her in her legal case against another person. For a long time the judge would not give her the time of day, but later he thought that she was giving him a lot of trouble and that it might be better to just listen to her case. Even though he wasn't in awe of anyone, not even God, he helped her so she wouldn't hit him right in the face, one day in public.

Just like the unrighteous judge, God will listen to his children whom are

constantly praying to him, day and night. However, he is different from the unjust judge for He is patient and fair. Therefore, we can and should constantly pray unto Him¹⁹⁵.

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

In the previous parable, Jesus pointed out that believers should pray continually. The Pharisees did persevere in prayer, but they were not sincere. Jesus warned through the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, that people should not rely on themselves to be righteous. Nor should one human being despise and condemn another human being. Jesus emphasized that a person should pray in obedience and humility.

In this parable, two men went to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood where everyone could see and hear him. He thanked God that he was not like the robbers, the unrighteous, the adulterers and the tax collectors. He washed and tithes twice in the week, of all that he got.

The tax collector stood far away and did not even look up at the heavens, but patted his chest and said, “O God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” The Lord explained to the crowd that it was not the Pharisee but the tax collector who went home righteously. The Pharisee thought he was better than others were and listed all his good deeds without thinking about his own sin. However, he well noticed the bad qualities of the tax collector. The tax collector, on the other hand, was well aware of his own sins and weaknesses and confessed them. God therefore forgave his sins.

Ten lepers cleansed

Jesus travelled from Ephraim in a northerly direction through Samaria to the border of Galilee. There, ten lepers, who remained outside the village, approached him. They stood at a distance as according to the precept of the law and asked Jesus to have mercy on them. Jesus sent them away with the command that they should show them to the priest. As they walked towards the priest, they found out that they were healthy! Only the Samaritan turned around to give thanks to Jesus!

195 Ephesians 6: 18

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”

Jesus asked him where the other nine were. Did the other nine not understand that God had healed them? Again, the Samaritan set the good example. Jesus told him that he could go; his faith saved him. The Samaritan's faith came out of his gratitude; for faith without gratitude is not possible¹⁹⁶.

Marriage and divorce

The Lord Jesus travelled with His disciples to Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover. He went openly with the other feasters. The large group of travellers was enthusiastic. They cherished the expectation that Jesus would proclaim his kingship and deliver Israel from the hated Romans. There were also Pharisees amongst the group. They were still looking for an opportunity to corner him with trick questions. One of them then asked Jesus if a husband could divorce his wife for some reason.

Jesus answered him that at creation God created man and woman. Furthermore, God has ordained that they must leave their parents' home to live in a close relationship (covenant) with one another in order to become one¹⁹⁷. This unity established by God must not be separated by any man¹⁹⁸. So God does not want humans to separate. Therefore, it is wrong to argue about the reasons why one may divorce, because whoever argues about it does not recognize God's purpose for marriage.

They weren't quite satisfied with Jesus's answer. They wanted to know from him why Moses allowed husbands to divorce their wives. Jesus replied that Moses allowed them to divorce because they were so stubborn. However, he made it clear that it was not God's intention for a man to divorce his wife.

Jesus further explained that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. If a person marries a divorced woman, he also commits adultery. This means that with the second marriage they commit the sin of adultery against the first marriage and so break up the first marriage.

196 Hebrews 12: 28

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

197 Genesis 2: 24

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be[a] joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

198 1 Corinthians 7: 10-11

"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife."

This is the case for divorce with regards to all sorts of causes, but not in the case where marital unfaithfulness has already occurred. If one party deceived the other person by having sexual relations with another person, adultery has already occurred and adultery no longer takes place with the second marriage.

Jesus blesses little children

special happened to emphasize the blessing and happiness of the marriage. Some mothers brought their children to Jesus and asked Him to bless them. The disciples thought the mothers were troublesome because Jesus was busy with serious things and he didn't have time to spend with children. They were actually of the opinion that women and children did not belong there, so the disciples barred the mothers from coming close to Jesus with their little children.

However, when Jesus saw what was happening, he said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." With those important words, Jesus invited the mothers and their children to himself. They have a place in his kingdom, so he makes time for them. He picked the little children up in his arms, hugged them and blessed them. He then pointed his disciples to the example of the child one more time. Only those who receive the kingdom of God like a child would be saved. Jesus, through his actions, gave a new value to mothers and their children in Christian society.

Jesus councils the rich young ruler

After Jesus blessed the children, He and his disciples wanted to leave for Jerusalem, but a young scribe, who was very rich, fell on his knees before Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He wanted the reassurance that he would get eternal life because he faithfully upheld the law. The instructions of the scribes did not satisfy him, so he asked Jesus what he should do.

Jesus wanted to know from the young man why he called Him "good." Jesus pointed out that there is only one who is good, namely God. It would be wrong to infer that Jesus implied He was not good, that is, that He was not perfect and sinless. The young man addressed Jesus by the name that can only be used for God. Jesus pointed out to him that he was calling Him a name that belongs only to God. Jesus then told him to keep the commandments,

namely, that you may not commit adultery; not allowed to kill; not allowed to steal; not allowed to tell lies; you should love your neighbour as yourself, and you should honour your father and mother.

The young man replied that he already knew this and that he maintained all these commandments from his boyhood days. Jesus looked at him fondly and told him that he lacked only one thing: he had to sell everything he had and give the money to the poor, and then he would have a treasure in heaven. He had to take up his cross and then follow Jesus.

This demand was too great for the young man, for he was very rich. His possessions were an idol to him that he trusted and he could not dispense with that, so he sadly went away. Jesus told his disciples that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God¹⁹⁹. The disciples then asked contritely, who could be saved? Jesus answered that what is impossible for humans is possible with God.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard

After the rich young man left, Peter told Jesus that they had forsaken everything to follow him. Jesus replied that those who followed him, in newness of life, would receive much more than they sacrificed. He added that many who were first will be last and who were last will be first.

The kingdom of heaven was like a master of the house hiring workers for his vineyard early in the morning. Both parties agreed that they would work for a penny a day. He then sent them to his vineyard. By nine o'clock he had picked up more labourers at the market who did not have a job. He promised them that he would pay them what was right. He hired another group of labourers at twelve o'clock and another group at three o'clock and even a group at five o'clock in the afternoon.

That evening he called all the workers together to pay them. He started with the last ones, those who were working for only one hour and he paid everyone in that group a penny. The others then expected to receive more because they worked all day, but they each also only got a penny. They complained about it. The master then replied that he had paid them a

199 1 Timothy 6: 9-10

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

penny as they had agreed upon that morning. There was no reason to be dissatisfied. It was his money and he could make whatever he wanted with it. He wanted to pay the last ones just as much as he paid for the first ones.

God (the master of the house) gives to all whom He has chosen, eternal life (a penny) as a gift. It is not about whether a person deserves eternal life by his actions, nor about how long that person has served the Lord. It's about the Lord giving it to us by grace, because we don't deserve it²⁰⁰. Therefore, there should be no envy or jealousy. Jesus added that many who are first would be last, and who were last would be first, for many were called, but few were chosen!

Jesus a third time predicts his death and resurrection

Near Jerusalem, Jesus took aside His disciples and prepared them for His deliverance in Jerusalem to the chief priests and scribes and that He will be sentenced to death. He would be mocked and abused by the gentiles and die on a cross, but rise from the dead on the third day.

The disciples were shocked! That wasn't what they wanted to hear. They looked forward to the day when Jesus would restore the earthly kingdom of David. Actually, they expected Jesus to be proclaimed king in Jerusalem in the near future and this news made them very upset. They understood nothing about the cross nor of the resurrection from the dead. This frightened and distressed them.

Greatness is serving

The woman of Zebedee (Salomé) knelt with her two sons at Jesus and asked Him a favour. She asked Him if one day her two sons might sit in His kingdom, one on His right and one on His left. Yet Jesus told her and her sons that they did not know what they were asking. He wanted to know from them whether they could drink the cup He was to drink or if they had been baptized with the baptism with which He had been baptized. They did not understand what Jesus meant, but answered in the affirmative anyway.

Jesus knew what lay ahead for them. He knew that James would be killed

200 Ephesians 2: 8-9

“ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

with the sword in Jerusalem²⁰¹ and that John would be exiled to Patmos²⁰². Therefore, they later drank from the cup of the Lord and they were baptized at his baptism, but Jesus did not grant their request. It rested with God to allocate the places of honour. These assignments are fixed in God's eternal counsel.

Salomé and her sons accepted Jesus's answer, but the other disciples were angry when they heard about Salomé's request. They probably felt that the places of honour were due to them. Jesus called them and said that even though they were used to the rulers of the nations ruling over them, they should not try to master each other. Everyone who wanted to be great had to be willing to serve the other²⁰³. Likewise, He did not come to be served, but to serve. He gave his life so that many could be saved.

In doing so, Jesus laid down one of the fundamentals of the kingdom of God. He, the perfect, through His suffering and death on the cross, redeemed man (who was caught up in sin). His disciples didn't understand his words until later.

Two blind men receive their sight

The Lord Jesus travelled through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. In Jericho, there were two blind people sitting by the side of the road. One of them was named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out loudly that Jesus, the son of David, had mercy on them. The people around Jesus became angry and silenced them. They were in a hurry to get to Jerusalem because they expected Jesus to do something great. However, the two men did not keep quiet and cried even louder. Jesus stopped and asked them what he should do for them? They wanted to see. Jesus pitied them, touched their eyes and they could see! They then followed Jesus.

201 Acts 12: 2

202 Revelation 1: 9

203 Hebrews 6: 10

"Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

"I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Zacchaeus

In Jericho there was a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus who wanted to see the Lord. Unfortunately, Zacchaeus was a short man, and he could not get close to Jesus because there were just too many people crowding around Jesus. He ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree so he could see the Lord Jesus from the tree when He passed by.

Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the tree and He told Zacchaeus to get down from up there because he wanted to stay with him that day. Zacchaeus quickly went down and took Jesus to his house.

Zacchaeus did not have a good name in Jericho. He was a tax collector. A tax collector was someone who had to raise money from the Jews for the government. The tax collectors sometimes over charged the Jews and then kept some of the money for themselves. The Jews hated their compatriots who were tax collectors and they definitely did not eat with the tax collectors, for they despised them and considered them very sinful people because they worked against their own people. Therefore, everyone found it strange and unacceptable that Jesus wanted to stay with a tax collector and everyone discussed it with each other amongst themselves.

Zacchaeus told the Lord Jesus that he would give half his goods to the poor. He also said that if he blackmailed something from someone, out of gratitude he would give it back to that person fourfold. Zacchaeus believed in Jesus from then on. His earthly possessions were no longer important to him, and his heart opened to his fellow man. Jesus was moved and declared that salvation had come for Zacchaeus and his house, because his entire family were heirs to the covenant promises that God had made to Abraham. With that, the words of Jesus that He had to suffer and die for the sins of many people were confirmed²⁰⁴.

The Parable of the Minas (gold coins)

The feasters left Jericho for the final shift of their journey, expecting Jesus to set up the kingdom of God in Jerusalem. Jesus made it clear that what would happen in Jerusalem and the manifestation of the kingdom of God were related, but a long time would pass in between the two events. He warned them that waiting for his return would be very difficult for believers for it would require patience, persistence in the faith, and great responsibilities. Jesus

204 Matthew 18: 11

“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”

explained this with the parable of the minas.

A man of noble descent travelled to a distant country to be appointed king and then returned to his own country. He called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas (gold coins) to trade with until he returned. His compatriots hated him and sent a delegation to inform him that they did not want him as king. (Jesus referred to the Jews who rejected Him as Messiah.)

When the man returned as king, he called together the servants to whom he had given the gold coins (money). He wanted to know from them what they had gained with the minas (money). The first servant said that with his gold coin, he made a profit of ten gold coins. The king praised him as a good servant and because he was faithful in the matter of a gold coin (only a little money), the king gave him authority over ten cities. The second servant's coin yielded five coins and his king appointed him over five cities.

Another then said that he had stored the coin in a cloth, for he was afraid of the king. He knew that the king was a hard man, who claimed what he did not invest and harvested what he did not plant. The king then told him that his own words condemned him and he called him a bad servant. He wanted to know why he had not put his money in the bank. At least that one coin would have earned interest in the bank. He then took the coin away from him and gave it to the servant who had ten coins. The bystanders objected, for this man already had many coins.

Through this parable, Jesus told his disciples what would happen to him. He was the distinguished man of noble descent to which the parable referred. He would say goodbye to his followers (servants) in Jerusalem, and travel to a distant land (heaven) to accept his Kingship there. This would be through his death, resurrection and ascension. The Jews, his compatriots, would revolt because they would not accept Him as king.

God has given him this kingship, and at His second coming he will act against his enemies and destroy them. He will then also give great responsibilities to his faithful servants. Each receives a coin with which one has to make the most of. This is the gospel of the kingdom, with which they must gain profit in the interest of their King. When the King returns, He will demand an account. The faithful will be richly rewarded, but the unfaithful will be punished.

Jesus prepared them that when they are arriving in Jerusalem it would not mean the appearance of the kingdom, but his parting. A very long period would then follow, in which they were left to themselves to make the most

of the coins they received. At the end of the age (that still continues), Jesus will come again. He will appear as King and Judge in glory and demand an account from all of us.

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24. Jesus honoured as King

Matthew 21 up to Matthew 22: 14 and John 12: 1 - 19

Jesus has all the authority in heaven and on earth

Jesus is indeed the Son of God and therefore King over all creation. We must acknowledge and honour Him as King. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah (a King of Israel from the House of David) and the advent of Christ was foretold centuries earlier in the Old Testament.
- The Jews (God's own people) rejected Jesus as their King.
- The blessing of Abraham in Jesus Christ, also passed on the gentiles after His crucifixion, resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit and from the gentiles Jesus gathered a church for Him.
- Christ is the cornerstone of his church in which we may have a share.

Jesus on his way to Jerusalem

Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover. It was on a Friday, the day before the Sabbath, and He decided to stay there for the Sabbath. The crowds that followed him had already left for Jerusalem. They waited for Him excitedly, hoping He would accept the kingship. The Jews at the time generally expected the Messiah to come to free them from the oppressive Roman yoke and to restore the earthly kingdom of Israel.

Jesus did not leave for Jerusalem until that Sunday morning, the first day of the new week. He travelled from Bethany to Bethphage, a small town on the Mount of Olives. He sent two of his disciples ahead to Bethphage to untie a donkey that had a colt with her (foal / a young animal on which no man had ever sat) and to bring them to him. If anyone were to ask them why they were loosening them, they had to say that the Lord was in need of them.

The two disciples went to Bethphage and found everything exactly like Jesus said they would. They untied the donkey with her colt and brought them to

Jesus. The owner had no objection. They put some of their clothes on the animals and Jesus climbed up on the colt. Some threw clothes open before him on the road. Others broke off palm branches and other branches of trees and scattered them on the road. The people who walked before Jesus and those who came after him cried out “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

The entry into Jerusalem

The crowd realized that the prophecy of the prophet Zechariah was being fulfilled when they saw Jesus on the donkey. Zechariah foretold that they would rejoice and be glad because their King was coming to Jerusalem. He was just and a conqueror; humble and He rides a young colt²⁰⁵. Jesus was truly the expected King, and He rode into the city, just as the prophet had foretold. He came in humility, but for Israel it was a day of joy. The people cheered and were overjoyed, just as the Prophet had predicted.

It was important that Jesus rode on a colt (foal), on which no man had yet ridden. This young animal was consecrated to God to do a work of service for Him. According to the Law of Moses, an animal consecrated to God should have had no defect and had never borne a yoke²⁰⁶. This colt complied with the regulations, and it was clear that Jesus rode into the city in the name of God.

Jesus honoured as King

The crowd praised God with great joy, crying out: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!” Those words were reminiscent of the words of some Psalms, which are sung at Easter²⁰⁷. Hosanna means, “give salvation or prosperity,” and it was usually with those words that the feasters were greeted when they arrived in Jerusalem. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem,

205 Zachariah 9: 9

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”

206 Numbers 19: 2

“This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come.’”

207 Psalms 118: 26

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.”

the cry of these words took on a deeper spiritual meaning. God truly gave salvation to men through Jesus, the Blessed One, who came in His name, to take on the sins of humanity.

Some of the Pharisees told him to silence his followers. Yet Jesus assured them that if they remained silent, the stones would cry it out. Jesus became very sad near the city and began to weep. If only the Jews knew what would bring them peace. Yet they did not realize he was working to bring them eternal salvation.

A dark future lay ahead for the Jews. Their enemies would surround them and Jerusalem together with her inhabitants would be knocked to the ground! Jesus was hard-pressed to think his people, whom he deeply loved, would still reject him in that week.

The Kingdom of Jesus is not an earthly kingdom

The Romans kept watch over the peace in the city. When the soldiers heard that a king was coming, they were worried, but when they saw him riding the donkey, they found no reason to stop the procession for a King like that, because He didn't pose a military or a political threat to the powerful Roman Empire, and as a result they did nothing.

At the temple, the excitement and tension peaked. Everyone expected Jesus to say he accepted the kingship and then things would change! Thousands of people flocked to the temple square, filling every space in the courtyard. Jesus entered the sanctuary without saying anything. He moved slowly through the people, watching everything. After a while, him and his disciples left the temple and returned to Bethany. The people were disappointed and they later dispersed because nothing happened, even though they kept hoping that maybe something would happen in the following days

The withered fig tree

That Sunday afternoon, Jesus and his disciples returned to Bethany. They spent the night there and went again to Jerusalem the next morning. Jesus saw on the way a fig tree that was full of leaves. He was hungry and walked to the tree to look for fruit. It was unusual for a fig tree to be full of leaves at that time of year and that is why Jesus expected there to be fruit on the tree as well. However, he found nothing. Jesus was disappointed and cursed the fig tree. The fig tree withered instantly and no one ever ate of its figs again.

The next day, Peter noticed that the fig tree was dead to its roots. The fig tree was the image of the Jewish people who were particularly privileged. God gave them many opportunities to bear fruit²⁰⁸, but they did not. They were very religious and pretended to be righteous, but everything was just like the leaves of the fig tree that hid its infertility and thus God struck his people with a curse as well.

The disciples were extremely surprised by the actions of Jesus because in the past, Jesus uttered sharp words against his enemies, but he has never uttered a curse. Many times, they witnessed how His words of healing and blessing are instantly fulfilled, but they suddenly realized that his words of cursing were just as powerful and immediate.

Jesus's words were fulfilled, either into a blessing or into a curse; and this was indicative to the disciples that they could ask God in faith (and without question), that which is humanly impossible, and He would bestow it on them²⁰⁹.

Jesus cleanses the temple

During the beginning of his public appearance, Jesus cleansed the temple for the first time. It took place during the celebration of his first Passover as a minister in Jerusalem. He found people in the temple selling cattle, sheep and pigeons for sacrifices. There were also people who exchanged Roman money for consecrated money. Jesus did not tolerate the desecration of the temple and He braided a whip of strings and chased everyone, including the animals, out of the temple.

The second cleansing of the temple took place in the last week (just before his crucifixion). Jesus was very angry when He came into the temple that Monday morning and saw that they were still trading in the temple. The high priests and the Jewish Council approved of this, claiming to have rendered a service to the feasters. The people who came from afar could not bring a sacrificial animal with them, because the priests made a series of demands that sacrificial animals had to meet. This meant that the feasters could bring an animal from home but that the animal was rejected by the priest because it did not meet the required demands. Therefore, it was safer and more

208 Hosea 9: 16

“Ephraim is stricken, Their root is dried up; They shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb.”

209 Acts 10: 43

“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

convenient to buy an approved animal at the temple.

The merchants abused this privilege and they sold their cattle and sheep and other livestock to the people at a great expense. In fact, they were so expensive that the poor could not afford to buy a sacrificial animal and this meant that they had to offer pigeons as an offering in place of an ox or a sheep. The pigeon sellers also made a good profit from the poor.

Jesus, knowing he was about to die; chased those who had made his Father's house a den of thieves, out of the temple. He could not stand the desecration of the temple and in holy wrath used violence to chase out the merchants with their cattle and their sheep. He then threw the chairs of the pigeon sellers and their pigeon cages over and drove them away from the temple. He also overturned the tables of the money changers and chased all the culprits out of the temple.

After that commotion, everyone looked at him in awe. He was an epitome of holy indignation. Jesus quoted the words of the prophet Jeremiah²¹⁰, that they make the house of the Lord a den of thieves, instead of a house of prayer as Isaiah described the temple²¹¹.

Die Jode het dus reeds in die tyd van daardie profete, die huis van die Here ontheilig en hulle het steeds daarmee voortgegaan. Jesus wou 'n einde daaraan bring en het die tempel gesuiwer.

The question about Jesus's authority

The chief priests and scribes were greatly indignant at Jesus's actions in the temple. They did not like that Jesus accused them of desecration of the temple, so they decided at a meeting to kill him. Yet it was festive season, and they knew the people had been gripped by Jesus's teachings and actions. As a result, they were afraid that the people would protect Him from them and rebel against them; therefore, they decided to try to outsmart Him with trick questions instead, hoping that they could find something against Him with which they will be able to accuse Him.

210 Jeremiah 7: 11

"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord."

211 Isaiah 56: 7

"Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

When Jesus returned to the temple early that Tuesday morning, they were ready. The chief priests, scribes, elders, and a strong delegation of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, joined forces together against Jesus. They had referred to his actions the day before when he had driven the merchants out of the temple and wanted to know who had given him the instructions and the right to act in this way. They wanted to accuse Jesus of causing a riot in the temple. Jesus was not in the mood to reason with them. He knew them and knew what they wanted to achieve. He posed a counter-question, as the Jews often did when there was a difference of opinion. He did not want to ask many questions either, just one was enough, and He wanted an honest answer. Jesus asked them whether the baptism of John the Baptist was from men or from God.

The rulers were in trouble because if they said it was from the people, then the crowd would be displeased, for they recognized John as a great prophet. However, if they tell them from heaven, he could ask why they did not believe him. After considering the question of Jesus, they realized that they, rather than Jesus, had fallen into a trap. They therefore replied that they did not know with what authority John had acted and this elusive answer confirmed their falsity. Jesus did not speak to them any further because they did not give him an honest answer. Jesus's authority clearly emerged there.

The parable of the two sons

In Jesus's parable a man had two sons. The man asked the first boy to work in his vineyard for the day, but he refused. The boy later regretted his actions and decided to go and to work in the vineyard after all. Meanwhile, the father also asked his second son to work in his vineyard. The second boy acquiesced, but he never went as he promised to do.

Jesus wanted to know from the scribes which one of the two sons had done the will of their father. The scribes replied that it was the first son. Jesus then told them that the tax collectors and sinners would rather enter the kingdom of God, than the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus told the Pharisees that John had come to show them the right way, but they did not believe him. Even after seeing Jesus's work, they still had no regrets nor do they believe in Him. The tax collectors and sinners however did believe in Jesus. The tax collectors, who initially did not want to repent, did repent in the end. The Pharisees, who always boasted about their devotion, did not repent to do the will of the Father.

The parable of the wicked vinedressers

The Lord Jesus indicated to the sin of His people with another parable. There was a man who planted a vineyard for him. He fenced it off, dug a winepress, and erected a watchtower. After the work was completed, he rented it out to farmers and went on a journey. With the advent of the grape harvest, he sent his slaves to the farmers to fetch his share of the harvest. The vinedressers did not like this and then they beat one of his slaves, killed another and stoned another.

The man sent more slaves, but the vinedressers killed them also. As last resort, he sent his own beloved son to the vinedressers, hoping that they would have respect for his son, but when the vinedressers saw the boy, they decided to kill him and take his inheritance. They grabbed him and beat him to death.

Jesus wanted to know from the scribes and Pharisees, what they thought the owner of the vineyard were to do with those farmers upon his return? They replied that the owner should kill those bad farmers and lease the vineyard to other farmers who would give him his share of the crop at the right time. With that answer, the Jews condemned themselves. The description of the vineyard pointed to Israel as God's vineyard²¹².

In Isaiah, the description of the vineyard was the introduction to a judgment on the people. Jesus used the same image to announce judgment on the people and their leaders. The farmers were the people who had to tend the vineyard of God, thus the people of Israel. However, throughout history they have always sought their own benefit and refused to deliver the fruit to God. The slaves were the prophets, who were killed by them. God sent his own Son, but for the Son they also had no respect and they were already plotting to drag outside and kill him. God's judgment would follow. The vineyard, the kingdom of God, was later taken from them and given to others, the gentiles²¹³. The new believers are now producing fruit at the right time.

Jesus quoted a verse from a Psalm that played an important role in the

212 Isaiah 5: 1

"Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill."

213 Romans 9: 25-26

"As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God.

celebration of the Passover²¹⁴. In that Psalm, the poet wrote about the stone rejected by the builders, but God enshrined that stone as a cornerstone

These words came true when the religious caretakers of the nation rejected Jesus. Yet God made Jesus the cornerstone of his congregation. The Pharisees realized that Jesus was speaking of them and that he was aware of their plans to kill him. However, this did not frighten them, but rather made them even more determined to carry out their decision. They wanted to kill Jesus at all costs, but they were not yet sure how to do it because they were afraid of the people.

The parable of the wedding feast

On that day, the Lord Jesus told another parable that agreed with the parable of the great meal (which He had previously told). The kingdom of heaven was like a king preparing a wedding for his son and sending out his slaves to call the invitees to the wedding, but they would not come. He sent out his slaves again with the message that the guests were to come, since the bovine and fattened cattle had been slaughtered and everything was ready. The invitees just could not be bothered went about their own business. Some of the people he invited even grabbed, abused, and killed some of his slaves. The king became very angry and set fire to the murderers' city, killing them all.

The king then told his slaves that all the arrangements for the wedding had already been made, but that those he invited were not worthy of being invited. He therefore ordered his slaves to invite everyone at the crossroads to the wedding. Therefore, they went and filled the wedding hall with guests; bad ones as well as good ones. When the king went in to check on the guests, he saw someone who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked the person why he was there without his wedding clothes and the man could not answer anything.

The king then instructed his servants to tie the man's hands and feet and throw him into outer darkness. That man wept there, gnashing his teeth, for many were called, but few were chosen.

In this parable, Jesus recounted how He was rejected by the Jews who were invited. The pagans are then invited to the wedding, but among them there

214 Psalm 118: 22

"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone."

were also people who were not wearing wedding clothes. These people belonged to the church, yet did not really believe in Jesus. They thought they did not really need Jesus's redemptive work and those people excluded from eternal life. Hell's pain and sorrow await them.

Recommended reading

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DE GRAAF, S.G. 1935. Verbondsgesiedenis: Schetsen voor de vertelling van de Bijbelse Geschiedenis. Het Nieuwe Testament deel II. Kampen: J.H.Kok 290 - 293 p.

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25. The last conversation with the Jews

Mark 12: 13 – 44; Matthew 22: 4 – 36 and John 12: 20 - 50

The Jews rejected their Messiah

God sent Jesus to His people in order to save them from their sins, but Israel refused to accept Jesus as their Saviour. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- God is not a God of the dead, but He is a God of the living.
- The Lord will provide; we just have to trust in Him.
- Those who reject the Son also reject the Father.

The Pharisees and Herodians joined forces against Jesus

Jesus's opponents devised a new plan in which they tried cunningly to outsmart Him. The Pharisees, who usually wanted nothing to do with the followers of the Roman government, were willing to work with the Herodians, a Jewish political party, in order to get rid of Jesus.

The Pharisees did not go to Jesus themselves. They sent young students with the Herodians who tried to trick Jesus with cunning, political questions. The young students and the Herodians initially complimented Jesus by telling Him that He is always honest, that He is faithful to the truth, and that He makes the will of God known to the people. They continued to praise Him for not considering a person's status or prestige and sparing no one. Although it was the truth, they did not really believe and mean it themselves. They just wanted to put him at ease to provoke him into saying something wrong. The goal was to get something concrete to accuse Him of later.

The question of paying taxes

The young pupils of the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was the right thing to do when you pay taxes to Caesar. They wanted to hear how Jesus responded to that question. They themselves believed that God was their king and therefore they did not have to pay taxes. If Jesus answered that they had to

pay taxes to Caesar, they could accuse Him of opposing the kingship of God. However, if He answered that they did not have to pay any taxes to Caesar, the Herodians could accuse Him that he incite the people against Caesar.

Yet Jesus knew they were hypocritical and bluntly asked them why they were trying to set a trap for him? He then told them to bring Him a denarius (coin). They brought him a coin, and then he asked them whose image and name were printed on the coin? They replied that it was the Emperor's. He therefore told them that they had to pay Caesar what belonged to him and pay to God what belonged to God. The young Pharisees and Herodians were stunned and beat the retreat. Jesus did not fall into their trap.

At these events, the Lord Jesus taught us to obey the government appointed over us²¹⁵. God is honoured when one submits to government, since all authority comes from God. God's will does not exclude the authorities, and therefore believers must not rebel against the authorities. One can serve God and also obey the government. With that pronouncement, Jesus gave an extremely important principle to his followers. The apostles later practiced these principles scrupulously in practice²¹⁶.

The Sadducees and the resurrection

The Sadducees also tried to catch Jesus with trick questions. Unlike the Pharisees, they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Through an instruction from Moses (which arranges how a man's name should continue to live on in Israel if he died childless), they attempted to outmanoeuvre Jesus. They told Jesus about a man who had died childless²¹⁷.

This man had six brothers. The second eldest brother then took his brother's

215 Romans 13: 1-2

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will [a]bring judgment on themselves."

216 Titus 3: 1

"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work."

217 Deuteronomy 25: 5-6

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

widow for him as a wife, but he also died without any children being born during their marriage. The same thing happened to the other brothers and eventually the woman was left alone without any children. She also later died. They wanted to know from Jesus whose wife she would be after the resurrection?

The Sadducees actually scoffed at the resurrection with their question. They were convinced that Moses did not believe in the resurrection either, since he had not thought about the resurrection in his instructions. Jesus told them they were wrong. They did not know the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Jesus explained that at the resurrection people would no longer enter into marriage as in this life.

God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. By this Jesus meant that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive because God had made them known in His Word²¹⁸. They are still alive after they died and Moses acknowledged this²¹⁹.

Everyone was amazed at the way Jesus answered the Sadducees. Some scribes, probably Pharisees, bluntly stated that Jesus gave a good answer. After these events, the Sadducees no longer had courage in quizzing Jesus

The question about the greatest commandment

The Pharisees were overjoyed at the way Jesus answered the Sadducees. They thought that Jesus was kind to them and that he would therefore not be so careful with them. They took the opportunity to ask him a question about the law, in the hope that he would say something wrong. A law student asked Him what the greatest commandment in the law was. The Pharisees themselves disagreed with each other about this, constantly arguing about which commandments were the most important. They distinguished between great and small commandments, as well as between commandments that were obligatory and those that were not to be taken seriously at all.

The same question had been posed to Jesus before, and he gave the same answer again. Every Israelite knew the laws of the Lord very well. From that,

218 Deuteronomy 1: 8 “See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord [e]swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.”

219 Exodus 3: 6 “Moreover 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 upon God.”

it was clear that you had to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind. There was a second commandment that was just as important, and this commandment was recorded in Leviticus²²⁰. Jesus made it clear that these two commandments were the most important in the law. Jesus refused to participate in the reasoning and gave an answer that no one could argue against.

The scholar of the law was very pleased with the answer that the Lord Jesus gave. He agreed with Jesus, adding that it was more important than all the burnt offerings and victims. This man was sincere in his faith and was not interested in the tampering of the other jurists. Jesus was pleased to meet such a person. He looked at him and said that he was close to the kingdom of God. No one dared to ask him any more questions.

Christ, the son of David

The Lord Jesus asked the Pharisees how it was possible for the scribes to say that Christ is the son of David, while David himself called the Christ “Lord”; how then could he be his son.

It was very important to the Pharisees that the Messiah descended from the house of David. They saw Jesus only as the son of Joseph and Mary, simple and unimportant people and Jesus also came from Nazareth and not from Bethlehem. It was important for Jesus, as the Messiah, to explain this matter to them. He then asked them why David called Him “Lord” in the Spirit, when David said, “Come and sit at My right hand until I have made your enemies a footstool of Your feet”²²¹. They could not answer Him because they did not understand how the Christ is the Son of David and yet simultaneously the Son of God.

The Jews tried to outsmart Jesus with all their conversations and with cunning reasoning. Yet they failed to do so and made plans to kill him. Jesus condemned the Pharisees and scribes with sharp words. In holy ire (anger), Jesus warned the crowd against their religious leaders for they refused to accept his words and predictions, even though it was clear that he was the Messiah. Jesus spoke bluntly about their sins and transgressions. He condemned them eight times with the words “Woe to you.” The Pharisees

220 Leviticus 19: 18

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.”

221 Psalm 110: 1

“The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”

and scribes were coming under the curse of God with their hypocritical religiosity.

Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees

Jesus spoke about the scribes and Pharisees hypocrisy and their desire for people to honour them. He was also angry because, through their interpretation of the law, they burdened people with unbearably heavy burdens, while they themselves did not bear them. Everything they did, they did so others could take notice. Their clothes had to show how religious they were. They held some of the best seats at dinners and in the synagogue. They stood at the market to be greeted by the people and they longed to be addressed as rabbi and called father. They did not understand that those who wanted to be great in the kingdom of God had to be a servant to everyone in this life. This means whoever wants to raise himself will just be humbled.

Jesus accused the Pharisees and scribes of shutting the kingdom of heaven for the people. Not only did they not go into the kingdom themselves, but also they prevented the people who wished to enter. They hid their greed for money by saying long prayers, only to be seen by the people. Meanwhile, they were exploiting the widows who sought advice from them.

Their teaching was very dangerous because they went to great lengths to convert people to their teaching and then make them children of hell. With all their cleverness, they did not know the meaning of God and consequently did not consider God's word to be binding. They were conscientious with all sorts of unimportant things like tithing herbs, but did not do the important things, like act right toward other people. They were blind leaders who were very religious from the outside, but full of sin and injustice inside. They were white-plastered graves full of death bones²²².

They also resisted the prophets of God. For semblance, they tended the tombs of the prophets, but devised murder against those sent by God. Jesus warned them that they would still give an account of the blood of all the prophets. They were snakes, a viper generation, to be exterminated. God's curse was sure to befall them.

222 Matthew 23: 27-28

“Woe to you scribes an Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Lament over Jerusalem

Jesus would have wanted it differently. After all, Jerusalem was the holy city, but the leaders of the city refused to repent. Jesus became deeply saddened by the city he so desperately wanted to save. The judgment of God would befall the city and the temple.

Jesus also had to be condemned and crucified by the Jews. But one day, in the future, at the Second Coming, they will see Him again and then they will greet Him with the words: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!²²³”

The widow’s two mites

On that day, Jesus sat across from the treasury in the temple. He watched as the feasters poured their offerings into the treasury. The rich came and threw a lot of money into the treasury. The priest praised them for giving so much. There also were the poor. One such poor widow came and threw in two small pieces of money, which together were worth but a tab (penny). Although the brass money pieces were worth very little, that was all she had. She could have actually kept that one coin to herself, but she did not, she gave everything she had to God.

Jesus saw what she was doing, and he showed it to his disciples. He explained to them that she gave more than the rich who threw a lot of money into the coffin. The rich gave something out of their wealth, but she gave everything she had.

Therefore, she threw in far more than the rich who gave from their bounty. She relied on God to meet her daily needs²²⁴. For her, faith was not just words because she acted in faith, devoting everything she had to the Lord.

The Greeks wanted to see Jesus

There were also Greeks who believed in God at the Passover. They also came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, and there they heard about Jesus. They wanted to see him, but since they were Greeks, they did not have the boldness. They then asked Philip (who had come down from Bethsaida and

223 Luke 13: 35

“See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

224 1 Peter 5: 7

“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

was Greek himself) to help. Philip was unsure because Jesus was very busy. He asked the advice of Andrew. (Andrew had a Greek name and he too came from Bethsaida.)

Andrew immediately took the Greeks to Jesus. However, Jesus replied that the Son of Man first had to fall to the ground like a grain of wheat and die before it could grow and bear much fruit. This meant that the Jews had to reject and crucify Jesus first then the gospel could be preached to the gentiles. He therefore did not speak to the Greeks at that time. Later, the apostles Paul would do this²²⁵.

The voice from Heaven

This was right before Jesus's imprisonment, and his soul was very troubled, but how could he ask the Father to deliver him from that hour, for that is precisely what he had come for? Jesus then cried out "Father, glorify your name." Unexpectedly, a voice came from heaven "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (John 12: 27-28)

Those who heard the voice were confused, as they did not know what was happening. Some thought it was a thunderclap, and others believed that an angel was speaking to Jesus.

Yet Jesus pointed out to those who heard the voice that the voice did not come for His sake, but for their sake. It was a sign that Satan would be defeated and Jesus exalted. Those who believe in Jesus will come to Him in heaven, but they have to walk in the light the same way as children of light does.

Jesus warned that many people would rather stay in the dark because they do not believe in him. The crucifixion would be a fulfilment of what Isaiah foretold²²⁶. The Jews did not want to accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and they rejected Him. Jesus declared that all who rejects Him is also rejected by His Father, because they have already been condemned by God. On the other hand, those who believe and walk in the light will not remain in the darkness! This means that believers will come in the full light and gain

225 Galatians 2: 2

"And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain."

226 Isaiah 53: 1

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

eternal life.

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26. Conversation about the second coming of Christ

Matthew 24 up to Matthew 26: 13

Christ's return

Jesus went away to prepare a place in heaven for all God's chosen ones. He will return to come for those who belong to Him. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- The church will experience vast oppression in the end times.
- The children of the Lord must prepare for His return.
- Jesus Christ, the Anointed, will most certainly return.

The prophetic speech

The Lord Jesus and His disciples left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives, on the east side of the city, where they turned and looked over the city. The tall buildings, the palaces and the temple were edged off in the light and shadow of the late afternoon. One of the disciples said to Jesus: "Lord see what enormous stones and what immense buildings!" The temple was built with particularly large stones. One stone measured 4 x 6 x 12 meters. At that time, the new temple was not yet complete. Construction began in 15BC under Herod the Great and was only finally completed in 64AD, ironically, just before it was destroyed by Emperor Titus in 70AD.

Jesus then delivered a prophetic speech and said with great sadness, "Truly, I say to you, there will surely not be one stone left here on another that shall not be thrown down." For the disciples, this was a shocking verdict. They learned throughout history that the existence of the people was closely linked to the existence of the temple²²⁷.

If the temple were to be destroyed, the people would also be destroyed. Consequently, they believed that the destruction of the temple would coincide with the final judgment and the fullness of time. The disciples then asked him, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what is the sign of Your coming

227 Psalm 68: 29

"Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, Kings will bring presents to You."

of the end of the world?”

The great tribulation

To the disciples’s question about the signs of the Second Coming, Jesus gave two answers: They had to beware, first, of deception about Jesus himself. People would pretend to be the Christ. Those false ‘christs’ and false prophets would perform signs and miracles with which they would try to deceive the elect. The followers of Christ always had to guard against such false teachers²²⁸. The accompanying signs of the end times would be wars, famines and earthquakes (the gospel according to Luke adds epidemics), but all those things were birth pains, the beginning of the new age. Secondly, they had to be wary of what would happen to them for they would be delivered up, abused and even killed for confessing Jesus’s name.

Finally, as encouragement and motivation, Jesus spoke about the wisdom that the Holy Spirit would give them in these situations, which literally also happened to the disciples Peter and John, before the Jewish Council in Acts 4. However, Jesus warned that the persecution would also create opposition within families (cf. Mark 3: 31-34), and He encouraged them to endure to the end, even if it meant death.

In his explanation, Jesus did not make a clear distinction between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The disastrous events that would occur before the first cataclysm (the destruction of Jerusalem) would be similar to the cataclysmic events that would occur before the end of the world. However, Jesus made it clear that these two events will not occur at the same time. The destruction of Jerusalem had happened centuries before, and the end of the world had yet to take place.

The tribulation of the church

Jesus’s focus shifted to the time of the temple’s destruction, and he warned his disciples that the congregation of Christ would suffer greatly during the tribulation²²⁹. They would be hated by everyone because they believed in

228 Psalm 68: 30

“Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples, Till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples who delight in war,”

229 Revelation 2: 10

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Him. They would be persecuted and oppressed, because officials in the churches and courts of the world would condemn them. Yet Jesus comforted them with the news that the Holy Spirit would assist and help them.

Jesus further warned that false prophets would rise up and seduce many away from the church. Disregard for the law of God would cause the hatred to become more and love to become less. Believers would have to be strong and take a firm standing against the tribulations they would face²³⁰. According to Jesus, the preaching of the Word of God would continue until all nations heard the joyful message and only then, the end would come. We are still awaiting that.

Disasters over Jerusalem and over the world

It is important to understand the prophecies about Jerusalem in the context of the end times. Some prophecies about Jerusalem came true during the lifetime of the disciples, but others are still waiting to be fulfilled.

The disasters that were to come upon Judaea would happen before the end of the world. The prophecy of Daniel that dealt with the destruction in the temple had already been fulfilled²³¹. Jesus's prophecy that the temple would be torn down came true in 70AD. The people in Judaea then hurriedly fled, taking nothing with them. Pregnant women and mothers with small children suffered the most. Jesus said that if they prayed to God, He would alleviate their suffering.

During this waiting period for Jesus's return, many false 'christs' and false prophets will appear and confuse the faithful. They will act so cunningly that they will deceive even the believers, if such a thing is even possible, but God will keep his property. The believers need to know that the coming of the Son will be unexpected and obvious to everyone, like lightning, which will be seen from the east to the west.

The signs of the second coming of the Lord Jesus

The great tribulation that will come upon men will also affect all of creation. The sun and moon will darken and the stars will fall from heaven and the

230 2 Timothy 2: 3

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

231 Daniel 11: 31

"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation."

powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time, the Son of Man will unexpectedly appear on the clouds with great power and glory. All the peoples of the earth will see Him and be contrite.

The great trumpet will sound and the angels will go forth to gather the elect, from the four wind regions.

Jesus did not answer the disciples's question directly about when the end would come. He only indicated the signs of the end times and compared them to the fig tree that begins to bud in early spring.

When the fig tree is in bloom it serves as a sign that summer is coming and just so the believers must also watch for the signs of the times to know when the second coming of the Lord Jesus is near. They could be sure of one thing, even heaven and earth would pass away, but the word of Jesus, with its glorious promises and assurances, would never pass away.

Be vigilant

With the second coming of the Lord Jesus, it will be as in the days of Noah. The people will go on with their lives in a normal way. They will eat, drink, marry, buy, sell and understand nothing until Jesus unexpectedly appears on the clouds. Then there will be two people on the land; one will be adopted and the other will be abandoned. Two women will grind at the mill; one will be adopted and the other will be abandoned. The believers must be vigilant²³² because they do not know at what hour this will happen²³³.

Jesus told three parables about the end of this world to encourage his disciples to remain watchful and persevere in the faith.

The faithful servant and the evil servant

The first parable was about the master of a house who picked out a faithful and discreet servant, he then appointed this servant over all his workers to ensure that they are fed at the right time. The master of the house then went on a journey. If, upon his return, the master finds that servant at his post,

232 1 Peter 5: 8

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

233 2 Peter 3: 10

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

faithfully carrying out his command, the master will then reimburse him and appoint him over all his possessions.

It can also happen differently should the servant be unfaithful and unwise. For over time he will neglect his work because his master stays away too long. He will abuse his authority by beating the workers and making life difficult for them. He will use his lord's property for his own parties and the master of the house will then unexpectedly come back and punish this servant.

Therefore, this servant only pretended to serve his master faithfully, but in his heart, he sought only his own interests. The master of the house will drive him out of his household and the servant shall surrender to his own bad conscience. We as believers need to understand from this that we have been given a special commission. We are to care for the household of Jesus Christ here on earth during the time He is gone. Together with other believers, we must form Jesus's body²³⁴.

Whoever is not vigilant falls into temptation, but whoever remains watchful is at once faithful and wise and will be richly compensated.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins

The Lord Jesus represented humanity awaiting His return, as ten young girls waiting at a wedding for the bridegroom to come. They wait with burning lamps. Five of them brought extra oil into jugs in case their lamps died. The other five thought it was an unnecessary hassle. After a while, all ten fell asleep.

At midnight, they wake up from a cry confirming that the bridegroom was on his way and that they must meet him. The girls who did not have extra oil saw that their lamps had died. They asked the wise to give them oil, but the wise say they should rather go and buy themselves oil, for there is not enough for them all. While they went out to buy the oil, the groom came. The sensible went into the festival hall with him and the doors were closed. When the five foolish girls later came, they knocked on the door and called for the groom to open for them. However, he replied that he did not know them. The Lord concluded his parable with the warning that they should always be ready, because no one knows when the Son of Man is coming.

234 1 Corinthians 12: 27 "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

The parable of the talents

The parable of the talents is very similar to the parable of the pounds that the Lord Jesus told earlier. A man goes on a journey and gives three of his servants some of his money to use wisely while he is away. The first one receives five talents, another one two and the last one only one talent. When the man returned, he called them so that they can give an account of the things he had given them. The one who received five talents brings back ten talents; he earned five more from it. His lord praised him as a good and faithful slave who was faithful about his goods. His lord will appoint him over many. "Enter into the joy of your lord." The one who had two talents earned two more from it and his lord praised him as well. The third one makes an excuse that he knew his lord was a harsh master and therefore did not dare to trade with the talent. He buried the talent in the ground and returned it unchanged.

This servant wanted to enjoy the benefits of his master's household and yet not do his duty to his master. He was an unfaithful servant. Therefore, the one talent is taken away from him and given to the one who has ten. The useless servant is thrown out into outer darkness, where there will be a weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In this parable, Jesus wanted to teach his followers that he was not making unfair demands on them. Certain gifts and talents were given to each of them²³⁵. They should use it wisely in the interest of the Kingdom of God. Whoever is faithful receives the reward of the faithful. Whoever is unfaithful is rejected.

The parable of the sheep and the goats

In his prophetic address, the Lord Jesus compared the division between the people on the Judgment Day with the separation a shepherd makes between his sheep and goats.

The Son of Man will appear in his glory on the last day. He will sit on His throne, and all the angels will stand around Him. All the nations will be brought before Him and He will separate them. The sheep He will gather on his right side and the goats on his left. Then the King will tell the sheep that they are the blessed ones of his Father and that they inherit the kingdom, for when He was hungry they gave him something to eat; and when He was thirsty, they

235 1 Corinthians 12: 11

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."

gave him something to drink. They took him in as a stranger; He was naked and they clothed him; He was sick and they visited him; He was in prison and they came to him. The righteous will not even be able to remember when they were kind-hearted to Him in his need, but the King will answer that they were kind to Him when they did it to one of the least important persons.

To the goats, the King will say that they never served Him when He was in need. He will send the accursed away to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. They will be surprised and ask when haven't they done him any good, when was he in his need. Then the King will answer that they neglected to serve Him, when they did not do it to one of the least.

Then each group reaches its eternal destination: the unrighteous will receive their eternal punishment, but the righteous will inherit eternal life. In this parable, the believers are also called upon to be kind-hearted towards their fellow man, for this is how we carry out the command of the Lord

The decision of the Jewish council

On the Wednesday before Jesus's crucifixion, He told His disciples for the first time, that two days later, at the Passover, He would be delivered to the people and crucified.

The Sanhedrin or Jewish Council also held a meeting on that day in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. They decided there, to kill Jesus but they would not do it at the festival because they were afraid of a riot amongst the people. Little did they know that this had to take place precisely on the Passover because Jesus had to be slaughtered like the Passover lamb for our sins.

The meal in Bethany

Jesus's friends in Bethany prepared a meal for him and his disciples in the house of Simon the leper on that day. Simon's name suggests that he was the leper, who had been healed by Jesus on a previous occasion. He gave thanks and honour to Jesus by arranging the meal and inviting all the friends of the Lord there. Lazarus and his two sisters were also there. Lazarus was at the table and Martha served the guests.

The meal was already underway, when Mary came in with a jar of precious nard ointment. She broke the neck of the flask and poured the ointment

on Jesus's head. Then she also anointed Jesus's feet and dried them with her hair. She anointed in great reverence and gratitude for Jesus, but his disciples, especially Judas Iscariot, thought she was wasting the costly ointment.

Judas told the others that this nard ointment was worth a lot of money. They could have sold it for at least three hundred pence, that is, half more than what was necessary to feed five thousand people²³⁶. For Judas believed that they could give that money to the poor. Judas said this, not because he was so very much concerned for the poor, but because he carried the purse. Amongst the twelve disciples, he was the one who handled their joint money matters and he was not always an honest accountant²³⁷.

Yet Jesus said they had to leave her alone because she did a good deed to him. They would always have the poor with them and whenever they wanted, they could do good things for the poor, but He would not always be with them. What Mary did was anoint his body in preparation for his burial. The Lord Jesus assured them that wherever the gospel was preached in the world, what she had done would be retold as a remembrance of her.

Jesus's words came true because there was no opportunity to treat his body with spices. After He died, they hastily laid Him in the grave, before the dawn of the Sabbath. The next morning, when the women wanted to take care of his body, he had already risen from the dead. Mary's act was therefore significant and will always be remembered.

236 Mark 6: 37

“But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?””

237 John 12: 6

“This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.”

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27. Jesus celebrates Passover

Luke 22 and John 14 up to John 17

Jesus came to serve

God's righteousness required payment for man's sins. Jesus met the necessary requirements when He as Mediator payed for our sins. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Jesus was the Passover Lamb, slain in payment for our sins.
- Jesus instituted the Communion to remind and assure believers of His warm love and faithfulness when He died with His body on the cross for our sins so that we might inherit eternal life.
- Jesus promised us a Comforter that would come and stay with us, namely the Holy Spirit, the vivification of Spirit.

The plot to kill Jesus

Judas Iscariot was disappointed in Jesus and according to the gospel of Luke Satan had entered into him. In the mean time, the Jewish Council planned to kill Jesus, but they did not want to do so on Passover, which was to begin two days later. They were afraid that the crowd would turn against them and help Jesus. Judas Iscariot's unexpected offer to negotiate with them about Jesus thus gave them the excellent opportunity to carry out their plans. Judas offered to betray Jesus, and they undertook to pay him for it.

Note the stark contrast between Mary anointing Jesus with the alabaster box full of expensive nard oil and Judas betraying Him at the Jewish Council. She anointed Jesus with a costly gift. Judas betrayed Him for his own gain and for the price of a slave.

Judas knew Jesus's activities and at the right time, he could commit this foul deed. The negotiations led to an agreement. They would pay the price of a slave for Jesus's handover, that is, thirty pieces of silver²³⁸. Their actions

238 Exodus 21: 32

"If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned."

fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah²³⁹. The chief priests weighed Judas's wages of thirty pieces of silver before him, but they did not pay him in advance. From then on, Judas sought the right moment to deliver Jesus.

Jesus and his disciples prepare the Passover

The Thursday before the crucifixion was the first day of the unleavened bread. That evening the paschal repast was to be held and thereafter the people were to eat only unleavened bread for seven days. The Passover was the commemoration of the meal, the night before the Exodus from Egypt. The paschal repast was to remind the people of the Exodus; how all their firstborn were protected from death²⁴⁰. Part of the preparation was to slaughter a paschal lamb at the temple, collect the blood and pour it out on the altar, then to burn the inner fat as a burnt offering. They were not allowed to break the paschal lamb's bones²⁴¹. They then took the lamb home and roasted it.

Early that Thursday, the disciples asked Jesus where they should eat the Passover lamb. Jesus knew about Judas's plan that is why He did not tell them openly where He wanted to eat. He did not want to be hindered eating the paschal repast with his disciples, so he had to keep the place a secret from Judas. Jesus then commissioned two of his most faithful and trusted disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the meal.

They had to go into the city; where they would find a man carrying a pitcher of water. They had to follow him to a house and ask the owner of the house for a room where the Master could eat the Passover with the disciples. The two disciples obeyed Jesus's command and entered a house that appeared to belong to a follower of Jesus. The man showed them a spacious upper room, which was already set up for Passover. By evening, Jesus and the other ten disciples arrived at the house.

239 Zachariah 11: 12 "Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver."

240 Exodus 12: 17 "So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance."

241 Numbers 9: 12 "They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it."

The beginning of the meal

With the appearance of the first three stars in the heavens, silver trumpets were blown three times at the temple, as a sign that the day was over and Passover had come. Jesus told His disciples at the table that He very much wanted to eat the Passover with them, because He would only eat of it again after the kingdom of God had been fulfilled. He gave thanks, took the first cup, and told them to share it among themselves for He would not drink wine until the kingdom of God came.

Contention over ranking

The disciples were arguing amongst themselves about who should sit where at the table. Mealtimes were often fought over, especially among the Pharisees who were so set on their own honour. Some disciples were also dissatisfied with the places they had to sit. Jesus then explained again that in the kingdom of God it is different from the world. In the world, the one who sits at the table is more important than the one who wait upon the table of guests, but in the kingdom of God, it is the other way around.

Jesus came to serve, and his entire, earthly life testified to that and if the disciples could live ministrant, there would be a reward for them. They would eat and drink at His table in Jesus's kingdom and sit on twelve thrones to judge the tribes of Israel²⁴². Therefore, they had to strive to do acts of love.

Jesus washed the feet of His disciples

Jesus demonstrated the lesson of service practically so that His disciples would never forget it. In an act of love, Jesus took off his outer garments and tied a linen cloth around him like a slave. He poured water into a bowl, washed His disciples's feet, and dried them off with a cloth. They were deathly silent, too embarrassed and surprised to say anything. Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, to which Jesus replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." Peter then said that the Lord had to wash not only his feet, but also his hands and his head. However, this was not necessary.

242 Revelation 20: 4

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Jesus wanted to teach his disciples to serve one another. Jesus also knew that Judas had already arranged with the Jews to hand Him over to them for thirty shekels of silver. The Lord Jesus therefore replied that he who is washed is completely clean. So only his feet could still be washed. They were clean, but not all of them, for yes, the Lord Jesus knew who would betray Him.

Jesus sat down again and made it clear that they needed to wash each other's feet because washing someone's feet was the humblest job and they had to serve each other rather than try to rule over each other. The Lord Jesus concluded with the sad thought that He was not speaking of them all. He knew who was chosen to betray Him so that the Scriptures could be fulfilled. He then declared that his traitor was seated at the table with Him and that his traitor went to dinner with Him²⁴³.

Jesus identifies His betrayer

Jesus was upset during the meal. He had to put up with Judas eating with them, pretending to be a faithful disciple, but in the meantime, Judas's heart was full of plans to murder Him. He later admitted that He was upset because one of those eating with Him would betray Him. The disciples were shocked and one after another asked him, "Is it perhaps I, Lord?" The Son of Man would walk the path as it is written of Him, but it would have been better for the one who betrays Him if he had never been born.

Peter gave John a sign that he had to ask Jesus to designate the person and thus John posed the question to Jesus. Jesus replied that the traitor was the person to whom He would give the piece of bread after dipping it into the bitter sauce. Judas pretended to be upset by the verdict of Jesus and tried to present himself as innocently as possible and then Judas asked Jesus if maybe it was he? At that moment, Jesus gave the loaf of bread to Judas and said, "You said it."

The devil entered Judas the moment he took the piece of bread. Jesus told him (the devil) to do what he needed to but to do quickly. The other disciples did not grasp what the Lord meant, thinking Jesus sent Judas to buy something. Judas immediately got up and went out into the night to arrange with the chief priests to catch Jesus.

243 Psalm 41: 10

"But You, O Lord, be merciful to me, and raise me up, That I may repay them."

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper

After Judas left, everything became calm again. Jesus recognized that his time was very short and for the last time He took a piece of bread gave thanks, broke it, and then said, "This is my body given to you; do this to my memory." In the same way, He took the cup after the meal and said, "This cup is the new covenant (testament) in my blood which is shed for you."

The Lord Jesus instituted the Holy Communion with it. The Passover lamb was no longer needed because our true Passover lamb, Jesus Christ, was slaughtered for us²⁴⁴. We now celebrate communion in his remembrance and are nourished and lavished by the Holy Spirit inwardly through communion with him.

Jesus bid farewell

Jesus was deeply aware of the suffering he would have to endure in a matter of hours, but when He spoke to his disciples, His words were not full of anguish or distress, but rather full of victory. The suffering He had to endure, to die like a criminal on the cross, was part of God's divine plan. Jesus (the Son) would carry out God's (the Father's) plan of salvation and open the way to glory for all who accept salvation by faith²⁴⁵.

Jesus explained to his disciples that the Son of Man would be glorified and that through the Son, God would also be glorified. He warned them that He would only be with them for a little while. They would seek Jesus, but where He went, they could not come. With the separation period in view, Jesus gave them a new commandment, and they were to arrange their lives according to this. The most important instruction was to love one another, because if they loved one another, everyone would know that they were disciples of Him. He himself set the example of loving them and confirmed it by washing their feet.

The Lord Jesus informed them that He was going to His Father and that they should not be upset about it. He called them to believe in God (his Father); and in Him. He explained that there is a lot of room in his Father's

244 1 Corinthians 5: 7

"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

245 Philippians 2: 8-9

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,"

house. He would go to fix a place for them and come again to take them there. Therefore, they had to live here on earth, as people on their way to the Father's house, in heaven.

Thomas then told Jesus that they did not know where He was going and he asked Jesus how they would know the way to the Father's house. Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known my Father also, and from now on you know Him and you have seen Him." When asked by Philip that he had to show them the Father, he replied, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14: 6-9) This means that Jesus and his Father are one and one could see this from Jesus's work. The Lord Jesus promised them that they would still do great work in His name because He would give them everything they asked of Him in prayer, this means that while they were living on earth they would already be living from the hand of the Father.

Jesus promise another helper

Jesus promised his disciples that He would not leave them alone. He undertook to pray to the Father to send them another Comforter (Paraclete), the Holy Spirit²⁴⁶. The Comforter or Spirit of truth would remain with them forever and not only with them, but with all believers. The world could not receive the Holy Spirit because they did not love Jesus nor did they take his words to heart.

Jesus declared to his disciples that the words they heard were not his words, but those of the Father who sent him. Jesus explained that when a person loves him, that person will take his words to heart; and the Father will love that person, and They (the Father and the Son) will live with that person. This means that believers (through centuries) have the Father and the Son with him or her, through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The Comforter or Paraclete would teach them everything, remind them of everything He said, and help them understand things. The Comforter would also bestow the heavenly peace in their hearts²⁴⁷. This would take the anguish and dismay away, even when Satan attacks them, for Satan would

246 Romans 5: 5

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

247 Romans 14: 17

"For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

continue in his battle against Jesus Christ.

Jesus told another short parable. He called himself the true vine and said that his Father was the vinedresser (farmer) and they were the sprigs. Each branch on the true vine that does not bear fruit is cut away and each branch that bears fruit is pruned so that it can bear more fruit. The Lord Jesus explained that even though He is in heaven, the disciples and all believers would remain connected to Him. When they are subjected to trial, it will be because the cultivator (the Father) is pruning his vineyard. It is the will of the Father, that they should bear much fruit and they can do this alone by keeping the intimate bond alive between branch and stem, by remaining in love.

Jesus also warned them that the world would hate and persecute them, because the world hated Him. A slave is no more important than his owner is and therefore the disciples's testimony would be hated by the people of the world. The Comforter (the Holy Spirit) would assist them and bear testimony through them. Jesus said these things in advance, so that when it happened, the disciples would remain faithful to him. They had to know that persecutors would banish and kill them from the synagogues because these persecutors supposedly wanted to do God a service. Saul was a prime example of this²⁴⁸. They had to stand out against these persecutors when this happened and realize that the Comforter was with them²⁴⁹.

The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant with these words: "A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me." When Jesus realized that they did not understand his words, He explained to them that they would be sad and weep, while the world would rejoice. Yet their sorrows would turn into joy. Jesus would leave, but after a short while, they would see him again and then their hearts would be full of joy. No one would ever be able to take that joy from them again. He said this with his death and resurrection in view.

The pontifical prayer

Jesus's conversation with the disciples concluded with a moving prayer. In prayer, Jesus brought the service record He completed on earth before the Father. He pleadingly intervened for those who belonged to Him. His

248 Acts 8: 3

"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."

249 2 Timothy 2: 3

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier."

view was directed toward the future and toward the expansion of his church among all peoples. He prayed for their unity within Himself. Jesus ended his prayer with the desire that those who belong to him would also be with him once to see his glory. However, for their time on earth, he prayed that the love of God might dwell in them and that he might abide in them.

By the time Jesus had explained it all to them, it was already midnight. In light of that night's full moon, they went out of the city to the Mount of Olives.

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28. The way to the Cross

Matthew 26: 31 – 75 and John 18: 12 - 27

Jesus is delivered

Jesus Christ was righteous, and yet He was imprisoned and unjustly condemned. This chapter focuses on the following main ideas:

- Jesus remained faithful to his heavenly Father during the time He spent on earth.
- Jesus was rejected by his own people, the Jews.
- We also deny Jesus with our sinful actions and disbelief, just as Peter denied Him.

Jesus predicts Peter's denial

It was in the night when Jesus and his eleven disciples travelled across the brook of Kidron to the garden of Gethsemane while the disciples probably wondered about Jesus's last words because among other things, he said he would leave them. Peter wanted to know where Jesus was going. Jesus explained to them that they could not follow Him, but that later they would also go there. The disciples did not understand that Jesus was talking about his death. Jesus then told them clearly that they would all let him down that night. He would become an embarrassment to them and they would flee from him. Zechariah's prophecy "that the shepherd would be beaten and the sheep scattered," would be fulfilled²⁵⁰.

These words made the disciples very upset and very sad. Jesus added that after the resurrection He would gather them together again and go to Galilee. They would see him when it was all over. Yet they still did not understand that Jesus was talking about his resurrection from the dead. The disciples were very sure that they would never leave Jesus, and Peter was even willing to die with Jesus. However, the Lord Jesus told him that he would deny Him three times by saying that he did not know Him before the rooster would crow. Everyone was dismayed after those words and they continued in

250 Zechariah 13: 7

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones."

silence. Jesus reminded them that He had previously sent them out without a purse, travel bag and extra shoes, and they confirmed that they lacked nothing. Yet, Jesus warned them that everything would change for before them lay very difficult times of persecution. They had to carry a purse and a travel bag with them and should one of them not have a sword, he had to sell his robe and buy a sword!

The prayer in the garden

Jesus, according to his custom, went to the Mount of Olives and his disciples followed Him. At the garden of Gethsemane, he left his other disciples behind, taking only Peter, John and James with Him and He asked that they sat down somewhere with Him. Jesus suddenly became very distressed, He realized that bitter suffering awaited Him, and that knowledge became too much for Him. He knew that God's wrath against man's sin would fall on Him. Jesus sighed and said that his soul had been grieved to death. He commanded the three disciples to stay there and to watch with Him. Jesus got up shortly afterward, knelt on the ground a short distance away, and prayed!

How could his disciples comprehend his distress, and how could they strengthen him? They could not, so he fled to his heavenly Father and prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass by me; yet not as I will, but as You will." Jesus did not rebel against the Father. Though he begged for another way out, he remained obedient to the will of the Father; even if it meant facing His death²⁵¹. The words of Isaiah that He was counted with criminals would be fulfilled²⁵².

The disciples fell asleep while on watch

After Jesus prayed to God He went back to his disciples and found them asleep. He woke them up and asked Peter reproachfully; "couldn't you watch with me for even one hour?" He then earnestly requested them to watch and pray so that they would not be tempted, for the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

251 Philippians 2: 8

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

252 Isaiah 53: 12

"Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the [a]spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors."

Jesus then went to pray for a second time: "My Father, if this cup cannot pass by me without me drinking it, your will be done." He found the disciples asleep again upon his return, for it was long after midnight, and they were dead sleepy. He left them alone and prayed to his Father again. He submitted to his Father's will, but the doing of God's will was so appalling that at the thought of it, He literally sweated blood. He repeated his prayer, and God strengthened and assisted Him in spirit. God sent an angel from heaven to support his Son. Peace and calmness came upon Jesus so that He was fully prepared to carry out the will of the Father

After his fierce prayer struggle, Jesus again found his disciples asleep, but it did not matter anymore because He did not need their support and assistance anymore, His Father strengthened Him. He woke them up and announced that the hour had come. The Son of Man would be delivered into the hands of sinners. They had to get up, because the traitor was near. There was a commotion at the entrance to the garden and the light of torches passed among the trees.

Judas betrayed Jesus

Judas went straight from the Easter supper to the palace of the high priest. He told them that the Lord Jesus already knew that he (Judas) wanted to betray Him. He told them how Jesus had openly identified him as the traitor and then sent him away. This complicated matters. After all, he could not have stayed with Jesus any longer to look for a suitable opportunity where he could quietly catch him. On the other hand, it would be dangerous for the high priests and superior to catch Jesus in public, because the people could rebel against them. The place Gethsemane was also risky, because the camp of the Galileans who came to the festival was nearby and they could have come to help Jesus.

They quickly decided to catch him immediately and openly and charge him according to the law. That was the only way. The high priests sent the temple guard, consisting of Jews, and a division of the Roman garrison, led by a chief of over a thousand, to go with them to the garden. Therefore, it was a great multitude of people with swords and clubs, who arrived in Gethsemane.

Judas walked at the forefront of the temple guard. He told them that he would indicate whom Jesus was by giving Him a kiss as greeting (as friends would greet each other). Judas hurried forward when the armed crowd came to a stop, and kissed Jesus, saying, "Greetings, Rabbi!" Judas still pretended to

be a friend of Jesus in order to cover up his mean deed. Nevertheless, Jesus pushed him away and asked if he was betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?

Jesus is captured

After Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, a division of soldiers with swords and sticks approached. (Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that they grabbed Jesus and took him captive.) John relates that Jesus asked them, “Who are you looking for?” And they replied that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus calmly said that it was He. The soldiers stepped back in terror and fell to the ground. Jesus then repeated his question. They answered again: “Jesus, of Nazareth.” Jesus once again affirmed that it was He, but He also asked them to allow the disciples to go. In this way, the word from the Lord Jesus was fulfilled that none of those given to him would be snatched from his hand²⁵³.

As the temple guards approached to seize Jesus, Peter drew out his sword and cut the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest, off. Thus, the high priest was also directly involved in Jesus’s imprisonment. Peter’s actions could have led to a battle, but when the soldiers leaped forward to attack him, Jesus was in complete control. He bent down and touched Malchus’s ear and it healed immediately. Jesus commanded Peter to put his sword into its sheath and told him that if He prayed to his Father, God would send twelve legions of angels. What was foretold by the prophets had to take place. Peter stood back timidly, and the soldiers tied Jesus up.

The high priests and elders stood watching, very satisfied. The Lord Jesus asked them why they showed up to him with swords and clubs, as if He was a robber. After all, he was with them every day in the temple, where he taught them, and they did not grab him. This all happened so that the predictions of the prophets could be fulfilled. His disciples abandoned Him and fled, and Jesus was alone in his moment of bitter suffering.

Jesus in the house of Annas

The high priests and scribes were embarrassed. They hoped that Jesus and His disciples would resist the Roman soldiers so that the Romans could accuse Him of being an agitator and rioter, but He voluntarily surrendered to them. The Romans left Him in the hands of the Jews and they had to get

253 John 6: 39

“This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”

a charge against Him in order for Him to be accused before Pilate. God disposed of it in such a way that the Jewish Council had to pronounce a judgment on Jesus. They first brought him to the mighty Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Annas retained the title of high priest and had much influence in the Jewish Council, as was later demonstrated at the trial of Peter and John²⁵⁴.

They were under the impression that Annas would be able to apprehend Him and make sure that a charge was drawn up against Him. Annas first questioned Jesus about his disciples, but the Lord Jesus did not answer his questions. He would not betray them, but He pointed out to Annas that He taught openly in the synagogue and in the temple. There were many who heard Him, including members of the Sanhedrin. They were the people who could give information about his teachings.

One of the servants of Annas slapped Jesus in the face and asked if this was how He answered the high priest? Jesus told him that, if he said something wrong, he should tell him what it was; otherwise, He wanted to know why the servant would beat Him if He were right. This claim of Jesus also embarrassed Annas because their actions toward Him were unfair. Annas concluded the preliminary investigation and then handcuffed Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Jesus faces the Sanhedrin

The members of the Sanhedrin gathered in the palace of Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Council concerned with the administration of justice and spiritual leadership. The high priest convened them for a meeting in the temple building. There was also a rule (stipulation) that the Council should meet in the daytime and not at night. Both of these stipulations were ignored by them, for the matter was urgent.

Most of the members of the Sanhedrin were present for they were urgently seeking to find the right accusation. Witnesses were called in to lay a charge against Jesus. According to the law, witnesses had to be heard one by one and before anyone could be convicted, at least two witnesses had to agree

254 Acts 4: 6

“As well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.”

in their statements²⁵⁵. Several false witnesses, who would say anything for money, brought charges against Jesus. However, their testimonies did not correspond because they did it for money and not for the truth. Finally, two came forward, bringing more or less the same accusation against him. One declared that Jesus said, "I can tear down the temple of God and build it up again in three days." The other testified that Jesus said He would tear down the temple made by man and build another in three days, which was not made by man.

Both statements had to do with the demolition and building up of the temple, which amounted to a violation of the shrine, but their testimony did not agree further. Both utterances were also a distortion of Jesus's actual words that he uttered in relation to his own body²⁵⁶. Caiaphas stood up and asked Jesus if He would not defend Himself? Jesus remained silent as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah²⁵⁷. The trial was a mockery of honest judicature, because the judges were only seeking a charge against Him.

Jesus is Christ

The high priest commanded Jesus to tell them if He was the Christ, the Son of God. That was the core question that all was about, for the Jews refused to accept Jesus as the Christ.

He went around for three years; all the prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in Him and He introduced Himself as the Messiah. Yet the rulers did not believe in Him. Jesus answered the high priest, "I am" and "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and see Him coming on the clouds of heaven."

The prophecies of Daniel²⁵⁸ and David²⁵⁹ regarding the kingship have yet to

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| 255 Deuteronomy 17: 6 | "Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness." |
| 256 John 2: 19 | "Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."" |
| 257 Isaiah 53: 7 | "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." |
| 258 Daniel 7: 13 | "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him." |
| 259 Psalm 110: 1 | "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." |

be fulfilled, and when that happens, the Jews who judged Jesus will face the judgment of Christ.

Caiaphas tore his clothes and cried out that they themselves had heard his blasphemy and did not need any more witnesses. The councillors agreed to sentence Him to death. Some even spat on Jesus. They tied his eyes, beat him, and challenged him to say which of them had beaten him? Jesus just stood there. He was bound, despised and beaten.

Peter denies Jesus

Peter and another disciple, probably John, ran into each other again after they fled Gethsemane. They followed the guards accompanying Jesus at a safe distance. At first they waited in front of the gate, but John knew the high priest and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest's palace, but he saw that Peter was not following him and he went back to ask the servant girl guarding at the door to let Peter in.

The servant girl, asked Peter if he was not also one of the disciples of Jesus? Peter denied this and went to warm himself by a fire in the courtyard. There came another maid who also recognized him as someone who was with Jesus, of Nazareth. Peter, however, swore he did not know this Man.

In the mean time, Jesus's trial ended in the palace. Peter watched his torture and humiliation from a distance. One of the high priest's servants, who were related to the man (Malchus) whose ear Peter cut, also recognized him as the man who was in the garden with Jesus. Thus yet another person agreed that he was also with Jesus, and he could hear from his speech anyway that he was a Galilean.

Peter's deep regret

Fearing for his life, Peter cried out, "I don't know the man!" He cursed himself and called God as a witness that he did not know Jesus. He was still talking, when the rooster crowed. Jesus turned and looked at him. Peter then remembered Jesus's words and realised that he had just betrayed Jesus. He hurried outside and with genuine remorse and sadness, he wept bitterly. He was willing to die with him, but at that moment, he was too afraid to admit his allegiance to Jesus. It broke his heart, but there was not an opportunity to ask Jesus personally for forgiveness.

Second meeting with the Sanhedrin

Early that morning, the Sanhedrin met for a second time in Jerusalem. Apparently, there was a rule that a death sentence had to be confirmed at a second meeting before it could be carried out and another rule stipulated that a death sentence could only be pronounced in full daylight. There were more councillors present for the second official session, but there was not a discussion on the matter; it was just to confirm a decision, which had already been made.

At that meeting, they decided to deliver Jesus to Pilate, but they struggled to formulate a complaint. They realized that Pilate would not mind a religious charge and they had to find something else to accuse Jesus of. Only when they appeared before Pilate did their evil plans become clear.

Recommended reading

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