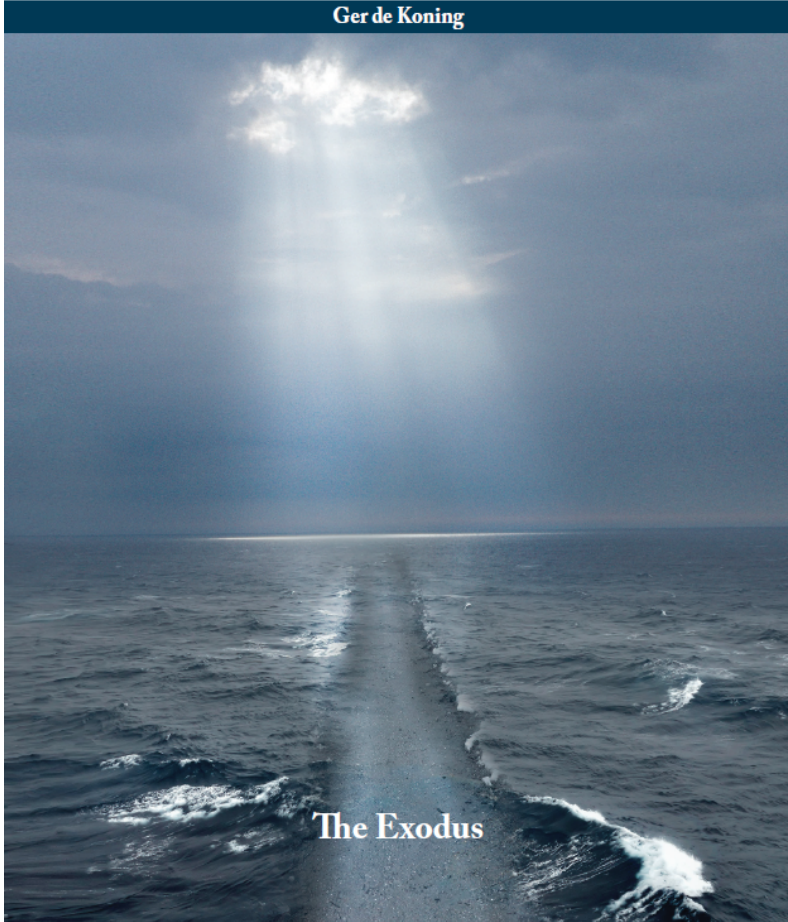


Exodus

Explained & Applied 02

Ger de Koning



The Exodus

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter tot Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

Explanation of General Format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

Exodus

Introduction

The name of the book is also the main subject of the book: the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

In Genesis we have a richness of different topics. These topics are often only touched upon there in order to be further elaborated on in the following Bible books. The redemption is an example of this. Only in Genesis 49 the redemption or salvation is mentioned (Gen 49:18), while in the book of Exodus we have an elaborate description of that subject. In fact, Exodus has only two objects:

1. The redemption of the people of Israel from slavery (Exodus 1-24);
2. The dwelling place of God, the tabernacle, among His people (Exodus 25-40).

Another difference between Genesis and Exodus is that Genesis gives us general histories, which are mainly connected with detailed biographies of various persons. Exodus is entirely dedicated to the history of the people of Israel. The only biography we find in it is that of Moses.

There are still a few important events in this book. We see that the law is given (Exodus 20) as the foundation of God's relationship with His people. We also see that the priesthood (Exodus 28-29) is given on the basis of the grace of God for His people. Through the priesthood, it is possible to maintain the relationship between the people and God if the people fail in the holiness appropriate to God's dwelling among His people.

God did not dwell with Adam or Abraham. He can only dwell in the midst of a redeemed people. That is why it is necessary for Israel to be redeemed. This is expressed in the song of redemption that Moses and the Israelites sing after redemption from Egypt and from the Egyptians (Exo 15:13,17).

In the redemption of Israel from Egypt, God shows a picture of the real redemption we find in the Lord Jesus. Moses, used to deliver the people, is a type or picture of the Lord Jesus. Stephen clearly shows this in his speech

to the Council or Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court, which is mentioned in Acts 7.

Everything that happens to the people in Exodus has happened to them as examples for us (1Cor 10:6,11). Through all that has happened to Israel, God wants to make clear to us Christians what redemption is. Redemption means that God delivers a people from any form of slavery and brings them to a place where He can have them all for Himself.

Before we know what salvation is, we must know what oppression is, what slavery is. You only long for salvation when you need to be saved from something. That is why the first chapters of Exodus are so important.

Exodus is the book of “a smoking oven and a flaming torch” (Gen 15:17). The oven speaks of oppression and the torch speaks of hope. God brings tribulation upon the people, that they may learn to call to Him. Before God redeems a man, that man must first realize his oppression and the bondage of sin. At the time when the Israelites are doing well in Egypt, they do not feel the need of salvation. Those who enjoy sin and all that the world has to offer, do not long for salvation.

Exodus 1

Introduction

The character of Egypt is different in Exodus and is not the same as in Genesis. In Genesis Egypt is the picture of the world blessed by God through the reign of Joseph, the picture of the Lord Jesus. In Exodus, Egypt is the picture of the hostile world ruled by a king who did not know Joseph and who oppresses the people. The king of Egypt, Pharaoh, is in this book a picture of satan.

Verses 1-7 | The Sons of Israel in Egypt

1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was [already] in Egypt. 6 Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 7 But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

The oppression does not start immediately after the arrival of the “sons of Israel” in Egypt. It is remarkable that it says that they came into Egypt “with Jacob”. The expression “sons of Israel” characterizes their position, as God sees them: “sons of the prince of God” (Israel means “prince of God”). The expression “with Jacob” refers to their practice, to the discipline God must exercise over them.

They come with a total of seventy people. Under the grace of God, they are fruitful and grow into a mighty people who, at the time of their exodus alone, number about six hundred thousand men (Exo 12:37; 38:26). If we include women and children, the total population will have been around three million people.

Verse 8 | A New King

| *8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*

A new king is going to rule Egypt. His characteristic is that he has no bond whatsoever with, or even a memory of Joseph (Acts 7:18).

He, to whom all of Egypt owe their life and who had done so much good for that people, is totally forgotten. So it is with the world of which satan is the god – he is called “the god of this world” (2Cor 4:4) – and of which he is also the controller; the Lord Jesus calls him “the ruler of this world” (Jn 12:31). “The Savior of the world” (Jn 4:42) has no place here, one does not think of Him. On the contrary, satan keeps the people of the world in slavery.

Verses 9-14 | The Israelites Afflicted

9 He said to his people, “Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10 Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.” 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all [kinds] of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

For the king of Egypt, this fast-growing people is a threat. He calls on his people to act “wisely” against the Israelites. This is the imagination of the world, which believes it is wise to define a strategy to nip impending danger in the bud. Pharaoh thinks that by affliction he can keep his grip on them. He starts by afflicting the adults and makes them slaves. Later on he attacks the children. Egypt is beginning to become the “smoking oven” of Abraham’s vision (Gen 15:12-21; cf. Deu 4:20). But God begins to fulfill the promise He made in the same vision of Abraham.

Man, who is subject to satan in slavery helps to build his kingdom, whether he is aware of it or not. He is dragged further and further along, deeper and deeper into satan’s realm. If someone hangs onto money, every additional dollar that he gets is an extra link in the chain around his neck. The love of money increases with the increase of money.

Someone who wants to free himself from sin is increasingly caught in the grip of sin. That is the experience of the person in Romans 7, who is becoming increasingly desperate. Until he exclaims: "Wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24). Then salvation is near. In what happened to Israel in Egypt, we see a picture of this.

Pharaoh's 'wise' actions do not have the effect intended by him. Quite the contrary, because the harder the affliction gets, the more the people expand. God works on His plan, using the evil plan of Pharaoh. It is not Pharaoh who has the power, but God. That God has the power is not yet visible, for the Egyptians made the lives of the Israelites "bitter with hard labor". But faith looks beyond it to God and that He will eventually be glorified.

Verses 15-22 | The Midwives

15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; 16 and he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see [them] upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." 17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them." 20 So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. 21 Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive."*

* Birthstool is literally 'two stones', like the 'wheel', literally 'pair of stone discs', of the potter in Jeremiah 18 (Jer 18:3), where the word 'wheel' is the same word as the word translated here with 'two stones'. Presumably, the use of the birthstool points to the method of childbirth in which the woman was sitting on two stones. It may also be the custom that the woman was supporting herself on two stones in a crouching position during childbirth.

When Pharaoh sees that his 'wise' strategy does not have the desired effect, he turns against the newborn boys. His cruelty and ruthlessness are now clearly visible. What is more defenseless, but also more endearing than a newborn baby? Anyone who offends against it is heartless. We see this today in the blatant abortions of God-given life.

Pharaoh demands of the midwives that they kill the boys immediately after birth. But God makes use of these women who fear Him: they let the boys live. The midwives slyly circumvent the command of Pharaoh. They "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) and God blesses their conduct. He sees what they do for His people as done for Him.

There has been speculation about whether the women have been allowed to use a 'lie of distress'. Such speculation is not necessary. It is clearly stated that God was good to the midwives. Such a case we also see with Rahab who hides the spies and lies to those who want to capture them. But God judges it as an act of faith: "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25). In general, it is easy to judge certain acts of believers in circumstances we do not know. Therefore, in such situations, we must be careful when pronouncing a conviction. It may be that we turn against God.

Pharaoh's command to kill all the boys is reminiscent of the child murder in Bethlehem by Herod (Mt 2:16). In the actions of Herod and of Pharaoh we see the actions of satan, the dragon: "And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child" (Rev 12:4b).

If Pharaoh does not reach the goal by means of the midwives, he calls upon his whole people to help in the killing of newborn boys. That must be done by casting them into the Nile. The Nile symbolizes the natural, earthly blessings. All blessing in Egypt it owes to the Nile.

If we apply this spiritually, we see here a very strong trick of satan to suffocate the spiritual life of those who have only recently come to faith and have therefore become part of the people of God, the church, in the earthly blessings.

Exodus 2

Introduction

As an introduction to Exodus 2 it is good to read first the verses in Acts 7 and Hebrews 11 which refer to these verses:

Acts 7:17-29

17 But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, 18 until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH. 19 It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. 20 It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. 21 And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. 23 But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. 24 And when he saw one [of them] being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. 25 And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. 26 On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?' 27 But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US? 28 YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?' 29 At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons.

Hebrews 11:23-27

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called

the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

Verses 1-2 | Birth of Moses

1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.

While the people sigh under the hard slave labor, God starts to work for their deliverance. Without the people being aware of this, the savior is born. Moses is born into the family of Amram and Jochebed (Exo 6:20), both of whom are from the family of Levi. This is an important lesson for anyone who desires a spouse: it can only become a marriage that is to God's glory if both are children of God, that is, they are both members of God's family.

It is an act of faith in that time, when every little boy is a child of death, to conceive a child. But this couple does not fear the king's commandment (Heb 11:23). When Moses is born, Jochebed sees with the eye of faith that this is a special child, that God has a plan for this child (Acts 7:20). In this way we also may see our children whom we receive from God.

Verses 3-6 | Moses Dropped off

3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set [it] among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. 5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it [to her]. 6 When she opened [it], she saw the child, and behold, [the] boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

What is beautiful to God cannot remain hidden. Jochebed brings Moses just to the place where the king of Egypt wanted this child, the place of

death! But how does she do that? Faith never lacks resources. She puts him in a wicker basket (or box) that she makes waterproof by covering it with tar and pitch.

The basket is reminiscent of Noah's ark. The word for 'basket' and for 'ark' is the same word in Hebrew. Both the basket and the ark save those in them from the dangers of the water. The word for pitch, which is also used to seal the ark (Gen 6:14), has to do with reconciliation. With her action Jochebed acknowledges as it were the judgment of death that rests on her child. But in the basket she has made a provision, so that the judgment does not affect him. When Jochebed puts Moses in the basket, she puts a whole people in that basket and saves a whole people.

If we have to entrust our children to the world and have to let them go, we can pray for them, which is to entrust them to God. God has given the Lord Jesus for them to be safe in Him. Certainly the child must come to personal faith in the Lord Jesus. But as parents we can pray for it.

Exactly according to God's planning, the daughter of Pharaoh comes down to the river. He uses the tears of the baby to arouse pity in the daughter of Pharaoh.

Verses 7-10 | Moses Comes to Court

7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go [ahead]." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give [you] your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Miriam, Moses' sister, plays an indispensable role. It is also striking how many women play a role in God's plan for Moses. First the midwives. Then the mother of Moses who prepares everything to put Moses in the Nile. Then Miriam goes on guard for her little brother and brings him back to his mother. Finally, the daughter of Pharaoh who finds Moses when she has gone to the Nile with her servants. She lets one of her maidens take him out of the water.

Miriam supports the purpose of her parents and can be used by God to fulfill His plan for Moses. Through her efforts, Moses received his first years of upbringing from his God-fearing parents. This upbringing does not miss its purpose: later Moses refuses to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb 11:24).

Moses is accepted as a son by the daughter of Pharaoh. She wants to raise him up as her own son (Acts 7:21). In the same way the world asserts a right on our children and wants to shape them according to its own model. But God makes sure that Moses is formed by his own parents before the daughter of Pharaoh can exert her influence. It shows how important the first years of a child's upbringing are.

God in this way mocks all the power of Pharaoh. He makes the wisdom of the world foolish (1Cor 1:20b). He uses Pharaoh's wicked command to bring Moses to his court. That is God's wisdom. God's plan for His people is fulfilled not only in spite of Pharaoh, but even with the cooperation of Pharaoh, without his will or knowledge.

Verses 11-14 | Moses Goes out to His Brethren

11 Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one [around], he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" 14 But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."

All the splendor of Pharaoh's garden cannot prevent the heart of Moses from being with his oppressed brethren. One day, he goes to his brethren. His love for his people burns in all its intensity. He does not come to tell them what they have done wrong, but to see their "hard labors". He does not do this to judge them or only out of pity, but to share in it.

In the same way the Lord Jesus did not come on earth to judge, "but that the world might be saved through Him" (Jn 3:17). Because men "share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through

death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:14-15).

When Moses sees one of his brethren being beaten, he cannot control himself. He takes vengeance for his oppressed brother (Acts 7:24). The description here shows that the flesh is active in Moses. An honest person doesn't have to "look this way and that" to see if someone sees him. The Lord Jesus never acted like this.

What Moses did, does not remain hidden. This is evident when he goes back to his brethren and now sees that two brothers are fighting with each other. When he addresses the culprit, this one accuses him as to his action toward the Egyptian. On that word Moses flees to Midian (Acts 7:29). The reaction of his brethren is a bitter disappointment for Moses. He thought they would realize that God would deliver them by his hand, "but they did not understand" (Acts 7:25).

It happens to Moses in the same way as it happened earlier to Joseph, when Joseph investigates the prosperity of his brothers: Joseph was also rejected by his own. Both Joseph and Moses are in this respect a type of Christ, Who was not received by His own either (Jn 1:11). Christ is hated by His own nation, rejected, denied and finally killed. It is prophetic, therefore, the reproach of Christ that Moses takes upon himself when he looks after his brothers and wants to share in their fate (Heb 11:26).

The rejection of Moses is clearly expressed in the words of the Israelite who wrongs his neighbor: "Who made you a prince or a judge over us (verse 14)? This protest is quoted twice by Stephen (Acts 7:27,35), which accentuates its seriousness. The sin of this one man who rejects Moses is considered by Stephen to be a collective sin of the whole people: "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE (Acts 7:35)? This is an impressive illustration of the rejection of Christ, the Prince of life, by the Jewish people (Acts 3:14-15; 4:10-12).

Verses 15-22 | Moses Flees to Midian

15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well. 16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they

came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. 18 When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come [back] so soon today?" 19 So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat." 21 Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. 22 Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

What is presented as a flight in Exodus is presented as an act of faith in Hebrews 11 (Heb 11:27). We can draw a parallel with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was rejected by His people on the one hand; on the other, He ascended to heaven, waiting for the time when His people will accept Him as their Savior. The same goes for the time that Moses is in Midian and he takes a heathen woman as a bride. This is comparable to the Lord Jesus Who in this time, while His people Israel have rejected Him, receives the church as His bride. In the name Moses gives to his son, it appears that he has not forgotten his people, even in the foreign land.

The providence of God brought Moses to the court, faith brings him out. Moses might have reasoned that God had given him his position at court to use it for the benefit of His people. But then the people would owe their enlightenment or even deliverance to Pharaoh. This is not God's way of delivering His people.

God's purpose with the time Moses spent at Pharaoh's court, with all he learned there and all the riches he possessed there, is that Moses would give it all up again. What Moses gives up is more than any other member of the people will ever give up. God often uses men as leaders who have given up more than anyone else. They must have suffered more than others. Thus Moses consciously chose to "endure ill-treatment with the people of God" (Heb 11:25). He did not allow himself to be blinded by the beautiful appearance of what had surrounded him at the court. He has an eye for things that are only seen by faith.

When he arrives in Midian, his first act is again an act of deliverance. This time he delivers seven shepherdesses from shepherds who claim certain

rights. Moses went into the school of God to learn the shepherd's job. All the lessons he receives will soon be needed to lead God's people like a flock (Psa 77:20). The Lord Jesus is "the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11), "the great Shepherd" (Heb 13:20) and "the Chief Shepherd" (1Pet 5:4). From Him we can learn how to be a shepherd among His people.

During the forty years he spent at the court of Pharaoh, he "was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians" and became "a man of power in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22). In the next forty years (Acts 7:30) God will make him a man who He can describe as "very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Num 12:3). Before a work can be done by Moses, a work must first be done in Moses. Also with other servants, God has a time of preparation. Thus Joseph was slave in Egypt for thirteen years (Gen 37:2; 41:46), and Paul stayed in the wilderness of Arabia for three years (Gal 1:15-18).

Verses 23-25 | God Remembers His People

23 Now it came about in [the course of] those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of [their] bondage rose up to God. 24 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice [of them].

These verses are the introduction to the later service of Moses. While Moses is prepared by God for his task, God remembers His people. This does not mean that God has forgotten His people and is now thinking about them again. When God remembers, it means that He decides that the time for action has come. It does not say that the people are calling to God. Yet this is later said so by Moses (Num 20:16).

In contrast to the four words that indicate the intensity of the suffering of the Israelites in verses 23-24a: 'sigh', 'cry out', 'cry for help' and 'groan', we find four words in verses 24b-25 that indicate God's reaction: 'hear', 'remember', 'see' and 'take notice'. God perceives and is involved with His people in their suffering. He cares about the suffering of his people and goes to work to change this. He has the foundation for this in His covenant with the patriarchs.

Exodus 3

Introduction

Moses is called by the LORD when he is eighty years old. That is at the end of his natural life. In Psalm 90 he says this himself: “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years” (Psa 90:1a,10a). Before the Lord can use someone, a person must learn to renounce his natural abilities. Moses has learned this. However, it is not enough not to rely on one’s own skills. Now he must learn to trust in God’s power.

Verses 1-6 | The LORD Appears to Moses

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Moses spent forty years learning the shepherding trade. Now he is with his flock “to the west side of the wilderness”, or “the rear part of the wilderness”. He has, as it were, the wilderness experiences behind him. Many men of God have been shepherds. According to God’s heart, the shepherd represents best how He wants to lead His people. David is a shepherd: “He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them with his skillful hands” (Psa 78:70-72). It is written of the Lord Jesus that He is a Ruler who will “shep-

herd” the people of God, that is to say, that He would be a Shepherd to them (Mt 2:6).

While Moses shepherds the sheep, he comes to the mountain of God, Horeb. Horeb is another name for Sinai, the mountain where later the law is given (cf. Exo 19:11; Deu 4:10a). That is why the mountain is called “the mountain of God”. There the Angel of the LORD appears to him. Verse 4 shows that it is God Himself.

The Angel of the LORD is the manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. Wherever God appears to man, He does so through the Lord Jesus. It is the first time after many years that the LORD appears again to someone. Apparitions have never been the order of the day. God appears only at special occasions.

God also appears in different ways. To Moses He appears in a burning thorn bush. To Hagar He appeared at a well (Gen 16:7,13-14). He has chosen a ladder with Jacob (Gen 28:12-13).

The LORD appears to Moses and calls him when he is busy with his daily work. We also see this with the brothers Peter and Andrew and the brothers James and John. When the Lord Jesus calls them to follow Him, Peter and Andrew are busy casting a net into the sea to catch fish; James and John are busy mending their nets (Mt 4:18-22). This is how the Lord still works today. He calls people who are faithful in their daily work.

Moses notices that the bush burns but is not consumed. The bush represents man by nature, the sinful man. We also see the whole people of Israel in it, being in the burning oven of Egypt. We also see that God is in the fire. Therefore, the bush is not consumed. God uses the fire of trial to purify His people, and us. What is not in agreement with Him is consumed by the fire. As a result, we will increasingly answer to His purpose for us: to become more like the Lord Jesus. He is with us in the trial (Isa 63:9; Dan 3:25).

The LORD sees that Moses is approaching the bush to see the miraculous phenomenon. He sees in what we are interested. He rejoices when we show interest when He reveals Himself. At the same time He maintains His holiness. Where God is, is holiness. Moses must remove his shoes (cf. Jos 5:15).

When God has gained Moses’ attention, He makes Himself known as the God of the patriarchs with whom He has made a covenant: with Abra-

ham (Gen 15:13-14,18), with Isaac (Gen 26:3) and with Jacob (Gen 46:3-4). That is the ground on which He will start to act. He is and remains their God, even though they have died, for to Him they remain alive, which will be proved in the resurrection: "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the [passage about the burning] bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him" (Lk 20:37-38).

Verses 7-10 | Moses Must Go to Pharaoh

7 The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. 8 So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 9 Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

God says to Moses that He has seen what is being done to His people and He has heard them moan about it. He is familiar with their sorrows. That brings Him to action. He has come down to redeem them and bring them to a land He has chosen for them. And Moses is the man whom He will use to carry out His purpose, that is to say the first part of it, which is to lead the people out of Egypt. God knows that Moses will not enter the promised land.

The fact that it is a land flowing with milk means that it is extremely suitable for animal husbandry. The juicy meadows will ensure that the goats, sheep and cows give a lot of milk. The flowing with honey is another proof of the riches of the soil conditions of the land. The expression "flowing with milk and honey" occurs here for the first time and is repeated many times hereafter (Exo 3:8,17; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deu 6:3; 11:9; 26:9,15; 27:3; 31:20; Jos 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Eze 20:6,15).

In the coming down of God and the sending of Moses we see a picture of what God has done through His Son. The Lord Jesus descended to earth to save people who sigh under the yoke of sin. As with Israel, He did not speak from heaven, but came from heaven to earth. He did so to bring all who believe in Him into the heavenly land, that is, to bless them “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3).

Verses 11-12 | First Objection and God’s Answer

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

Moses comes with his objections. He sees his own

1. incapacity,
2. ignorance,
3. incredibility.
4. inarticulacy,
5. after which he finally shows his unwillingness.

Moses is full of objections. His first objection shows that he considers himself totally unfit for his task. When he was still in Egypt he was full of vigor. Then he would just do it. There his self-assured ‘I’ forms the hindrance to God’s work. Now his humble ‘I’ is the hindrance. When God calls, it does not matter who we are, but Who He is. He says: “I will be with you.”

This answer the LORD also gives to Gideon when he raises the same objection as Moses to the commission he receives from Him: “He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” But the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man”” (Jdg 6:15-16; cf. Jer 1:8).

Moses also receives a sign that he and the people will serve God on His mountain. With this, God also gives the actual purpose of the redemption of His people: that they may serve Him. Serving here means serving as

a slave. So far the people have served the Egyptians as slaves; after their redemption they will serve God and worship Him as His people (cf. 1Thes 1:9).

As fast as Moses acted the first time when he struck the Egyptian to death, so slow he is now to respond to God's calling. The man who has shown the progressive development of human nature now shows a reluctance that also stems from human nature. Neither of them can have a place in the work of God.

Verses 13-22 | Second Objection and God's Answer

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'" 18 They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. 20 So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. 21 I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians."

Moses comes up with a second objection. He is not convinced. Who actually sends him? He thinks he does not know enough about God to be able to speak of Him when asked. In His goodness and grace God also meets this objection of Moses. He acts with us the same way. He meets all our objections as long as they arise from our weakness and not from our unwillingness. In that way He speaks with an objecting Ananias whom He sends to Paul (Acts 9:10-17) and with an objecting Peter whom He sends to Cornelius (Acts 10:9-16).

First God points out the immutability of His Person: "I AM WHO I AM." He is the eternal Being Himself, the totally independent One. He finds everything in Himself and everything and everyone depends on Him. The Lord Jesus calls Himself so too. He says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58), which means that before Abraham's existence He has always been there as the I AM. He is the eternal One, always true to Himself.

Then God continues, "furthermore", (verse 15) with His answer, pointing out that He has Himself made contact with the patriarchs: He is "the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". This also means that He will fulfill the covenant He has made to them. The patriarchs have died, but the promises of God have not failed. To reassure Moses, God then tells him what will happen. He is the One "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done" (Isa 46:10a).

Moses and the elders must tell the king of Egypt that "the LORD, the God of the Hebrews" has come to them (verse 18). In this name, which Moses later mentions to Pharaoh (Exo 5:3; 7:16; 9:1,13; 10:3), the LORD shows that his people are a company of pilgrims. They were instructed by Him to "go a three days' journey into the wilderness", that they "may sacrifice to the LORD" their God. In verse 12 we have read the purpose of salvation: serving God. Now we see a special aspect of serving God: to sacrifice to Him.

They cannot sacrifice to God in Egypt. This requires "a three days' journey into the wilderness". The number three is associated with the thought of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: from the death of the cross to the resurrection are three days (Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). The three days' journey speaks of this. By believing in the death and the resur-

rection of the Lord Jesus a person is delivered from the power of the world, sin and death and can serve and sacrifice to God.

Pharaoh, by his refusal, gives God the opportunity to show His power. It is ultimately a battle between God and Pharaoh with God's people as a stake.

When they leave Egypt, the Israelites have to claim the outstanding wages of many years of slave labor. In this way God settles the debt Egypt has with His people. The payment will be made in kind, in the form of objects of valuable metals and clothing. These are things that are used in Egypt by the Egyptians to the dishonor God. However, these objects can be used by God's people to God's glory. Thus, the metal objects are later used for the building of the tabernacle.

Exodus 4

Verse 1 | Third Objection

1 Then Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

Moses has a third objection. He foresees the problem that the people will not believe him. That in itself is an understandable objection, for in all the time that the people had been in Egypt – which is now about four hundred years – the LORD had not appeared to them. Moses has to learn that his mission does not depend on how he will be received. A mission is never dependent on reception, but on the Sender.

Verses 2-5 | The Sign of the Staff

2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." 3 Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 But the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp [it] by its tail" —so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— 5 "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

In His goodness the LORD meets Moses' objection. He gives him two signs. For the first sign the LORD points out to him what he has in his hand. For the Lord, what matters is what we have, not what we do not have. We should also be reminded of this. With what we have, we may serve Him.

The staff here is a rod of power and authority. It represents here the authority that was once given to Adam. Adam had given that authority to satan. We see that in the incident where the staff becomes a snake. Satan speaks in that sense about it to the Lord Jesus during the temptation in the wilderness, and the Lord does not contradict him in it (Lk 4:5-8).

Authority returns in the hand of man, that is, in the hand of the Man Christ Jesus. Christ deprived satan of his authority through his work on the cross (Col 2:15). He therefore can say: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). The actual claiming of that power comes in God's time (Psa 2:8).

In faith that the situation has not got out of God's control, but that everything is under His control, we too may do our ministry. That is why we must not flee – what Moses did – but resist the devil. Our small abilities can be used by God to do His work (cf. Jn 6:9-13; 2Kgs 4:2-7).

Verses 6-8 | The Sign of the Leprous Hand

6 The LORD furthermore said to him, "Now put your hand into your bosom." So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. 7 Then He said, "Put your hand into your bosom again." So he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like [the rest of] his flesh. 8 "If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign.

Israel must learn the lesson that, although the devil now exercises his authority, God holds the ultimate authority. Through the affliction they experience the authority of the enemy. Then there is another lesson to be learned. There is not only outer slavery, there is also the indwelling power of sin. It's not good inside. The second sign, that of the leprous hand, makes that clear. Leprosy in the heart represents hidden sin; leprosy in the hand represents the outwardly visible sin.

From within, from the heart of man, sins come forth, and that is evident from the deeds of man, of which his hands speak: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting [and] wickedness, [as well as] deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride [and] foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mk 7:21-23). When the heart is unclean, the works of man are also. Only by faith the heart is cleansed (Acts 15:9). And when the heart is cleansed, the works can also be good works. Change of behavior and actions can never start from the outside. A cleansed hand is now fit for its use.

Verse 9 | Water Will Become Blood

9 But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

If both signs are not listened to, the judgment must come (Job 33:14-16). This is represented by the change of the water of the Nile into blood. The Nile is for the Egyptians the source of life. The Nile represents the natural blessings that the world without God – of which Egypt is a picture – enjoys through the goodness of God. If a man remains deaf and blind to the message of the first two signs, the blessings which God gives him to enjoy, and for which he does not thank God, will turn into a curse. Many have already been spiritually killed by the excessive use of things found in God's creation.

Verses 10-12 | Fourth Objection and God's Answer

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes [him] mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."

Moses' fourth objection is his lack of eloquence (cf. Jer 1:4-7). The effect of God's message does not depend on the eloquence of man. Paul has learned that it does not depend on excellence of words or wisdom (1Cor 2:1,4; 2Cor 10:10). The flesh may be impressed by this, but it does not contribute to God's work.

We must learn what Paul has learned, that God's power is accomplished in weakness: "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor 12:9-10).

There is nothing left of Moses' power in work and word. There is no confidence in himself anymore and that is good. Yet there is not yet full trust in God. He still has to learn that God also gives what is necessary to fulfill His task when He calls someone to a certain task.

In Christianity one is sensitive to beautiful choral singing, compelling music, impressive speeches, but that does not result in conversion. This only happens through the Word of God and the working of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, it is a misunderstanding of what the Lord gives or does not give. He can make everything so that it serves His purpose. We must learn to be satisfied with this. And not only that. We must learn that this is most effective for His work. Then He gets the honor and not the one He uses. It must be "by the strength which God supplies" (1Pet 4:11).

Verses 13-17 | Moses' Refusal and God's Answer

*13 But he said, "Please, Lord, now send [the message] by whomever You will."
14 Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, "Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. 16 Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him. 17 You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."*

Moses' fifth objection can no longer be regarded as an objection. It is a refusal. Refusal is not humility. This is no longer weakness, it is unwillingness to obey. Giving in to weakness ends in unbelief.

God's answer is accordingly. He becomes angry. He does not relieve Moses of the commission He has given him. God does, so to speak, deprive him of the honor of his mission, by giving him a companion in his brother Aaron. In this case, this is not a strengthening, but a weakening. This is evident from the course of history.

Moses speaks to the LORD again as "Lord", Adonia, which means Supreme, Commander (verse 13; verse 10), but does not do what He says. This denies His authority. It is disobedience (cf. Acts 10:14; Lk 6:46).

Verses 18-23 | Back to Egypt

18 Then Moses departed and returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please, let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." 19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." 20 So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand. 21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn." 23 So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"

Although Moses is called by God, he tells Jethro of this call to return to Egypt. He asks his father-in-law for permission to leave and this is granted. With Jacob we have seen a different behavior (Gen 31:20). Moses receives extra encouragement from the LORD (verse 19; Mt 2:19-20). Then he leaves with his wife and children and with "the staff of God in his hand". It is no longer the staff of Moses, but the staff that God will use.

Once again the LORD reminds Moses of what he must do and say. Moses must introduce his words with "thus says the LORD". This expression, which will be repeated so often by the prophets later on, will sound for the first time from the mouth of Moses. The names God gives his people here are beautiful: "My son, My firstborn" (cf. Hos 11:1). This applies above all to the Lord Jesus (Mt 2:15). God wants His son to serve Him (Mal 3:17) and that's why Pharaoh has to let them go.

The LORD tells Moses that Pharaoh will not listen because He will harden the heart of Pharaoh. That does not mean that Pharaoh has no other choice. The LORD is not dealing unrighteous, and Pharaoh is fully responsible for his conduct and actions. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. It depends on the kind of material.

God hardens a heart only after the person himself has hardened his heart. That is what the history of Pharaoh teaches us. First Pharaoh himself hard-

ens his heart (Exo 7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34; 13:15). As a result of this the LORD hardens the heart of Pharaoh (Exo 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17). He thus confirms Pharaoh's stubborn and self-willed attitude in his refusal to comply with His command to let His people go. Therefore, at the end of verse 23, the LORD already points out the final judgment of the last plague.

Verses 24-26 | The LORD Wants to Kill Moses

24 Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. 25 Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." 26 So He let him alone. At that time she said, "[You are] a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision.

After the LORD has spoken of His people as His firstborn son, he addresses Moses on his relationship with his son, probably his firstborn son, Gersom. It is that serious that He wants to put Moses to death. This shows that God cannot condone anything wrong with those He wants to use, even though Moses is about to carry out the LORD's command. The LORD can only use those who also observe His statutes in their families.

The reason the LORD wants to put Moses to death is that one of his children has not been circumcised. Circumcision is the acknowledgment of God's judgment on the flesh. The picture here is that God's judgment has not been carried out on the flesh of that child. It may have escaped Moses attention. Perhaps the originally heathen Zipporah didn't realize its necessity. She does it now because she has to do so, but with the reproach to Moses that he is a "bridegroom of blood" to her. What she means by this is not quite clear. Perhaps it shows that she, although against her will, did the bloody act of circumcision to save her husband. She then gets him back, as it were, as her bridegroom by performing this bloody ritual. The life of Moses is spared.

The lesson here is that it is of great importance to every leader of God's people that he rules his family under God's authority (1Tim 3:1,4-5). His family is his first responsibility. The LORD wanted to put Moses to death, as the head of the family, and not Zipporah.

Verses 27-28 | Moses Meets Aaron

27 Now the LORD said to Aaron, "Go to meet Moses in the wilderness." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him [to do].

The reunion with Aaron is hearty. These two will be of great significance for God's people in the time to come. Moses is a picture of the Lord Jesus as King over His people; Aaron is a picture of the Lord Jesus as Priest for His people.

The place of meeting is "the mountain of God". The subject of their conversation are the words of God and His miraculous deeds. This is a nice illustration of how our encounters with fellow believers should proceed.

Verses 29-31 | The Signs for the People

29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; 30 and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. 31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

As the LORD has said, Moses and Aaron perform the signs in the sight of the people. And unlike what Moses fears (verse 1), the people believe based the signs they have seen. They even bow down in worship before the LORD.

Exodus 5

Verses 1-3 | First Meeting with Pharaoh

1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" 2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go." 3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."

In their first meeting with Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron speak to him in the name of "the LORD, the God of Israel". This name for God is mentioned here for the first time in Scripture in connection with His people. In that Name they speak and bring forward without ado the demand of God. It is not a request, but a command to let the people go. They stand as God's ambassadors before Pharaoh. It is "My people", says the LORD. Pharaoh has no right to them. He will be told seven times "let My people go". He is told that the people should celebrate a feast in the wilderness to the honor of God. This is not possible in Egypt.

Pharaoh answers proudly: "Who is the LORD?" This fully indicates his character. He has no respect for God at all. He considers it foolishness to listen to the LORD. For him the LORD does not exist. This is pride at its peak. The flesh does not submit to God (Rom 8:7). It also determines his reaction that he will not let the people go.

Moses and Aaron then call God "the God of the Hebrews". Hebrew means 'someone of the other side', that means from another country than Egypt. God has determined that His people will sacrifice to Him. Any opposition is folly, both of Pharaoh and of the people themselves. If they do not listen, they will experience God's punishment.

To celebrate a feast for the LORD, they must make a three days' journey into the wilderness. The number three speaks of the death and the resur-

rection of the Lord Jesus. That forms their separation from the world. A feast is characterized by gladness. Joy is part of being in God's presence. Man's approach to God is on the basis of sacrifice (pointing forward to Christ's sacrifice). A heart that is free to enjoy God's presence is on this foundation. The sacrifice averts judgment and allows the heart to be in God's presence without fear.

Moses and Aaron do not speak about going on to the promised land after the feast in the wilderness. That is not deception. Once delivered from Egypt, one will never return to it. The wilderness is not the goal of salvation. That is an area through which we pass. The purpose of salvation is to bring us into the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and the Son. It can be enjoyed in the wilderness. For this purpose God has the tabernacle there as His dwelling in their midst.

Verses 4-14 | Increase of Hard Labor

4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get [back] to your labors!" 5 Again Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!" 6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying, 7 "You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' 9 Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words." 10 So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I am not going to give you [any] straw. 11 You go [and] get straw for yourselves wherever you can find [it], but none of your labor will be reduced.'" 12 So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters pressed them, saying, "Complete your work quota, [your] daily amount, just as when you had straw." 14 Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?"

Pharaoh sends Moses and Aaron about their business, accusing them of avoiding their labors and of wanting to stop the people laboring. His reaction is that he makes the people work even harder. He even gives the command on “the same day” (verse 6). What the Israelites get first, straw, is now being withheld from them. They have to gather it themselves. Pharaoh asks the impossible.

Satan works in the same way. He takes more and more. If he gives something, it is to take it back later and take much more. Every trace of charity is missing. Satan comes only “to steal and kill and destroy” (Jn 10:10a). He is “a murderer from the beginning” (Jn 8:44a). He finds the greatest pleasure in the misery of his slaves.

Pharaoh calls what Moses and Aaron say “false words”. Here too we see how satan works. He always twists the truth of God, he reverses it. He “does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [nature], for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44b).

Verses 15-19 | The Request for Relieve Rejected

15 Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why do you deal this way with your servants? 16 There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your [own] people.” 17 But he said, “You are lazy, [very] lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go [and] sacrifice to the LORD.’ 18 So go now [and] work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks.” 19 The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, “You must not reduce [your] daily amount of bricks.”

In their distress, the Israelites cry out to Pharaoh, but he is not the right one to appeal to. They have to go to the LORD. They don’t think about that yet. They subserviently call themselves “your servants” to Pharaoh several times, but all attempts by the people to get relief from slavery, he answers with ruthless harshness. He makes unreasonable demands on them. He shows his true nature.

The people are beginning to understand how hopeless their situation is. A person must first come to the lowest point of his misery if he wants to

experience the redemption God offers. A sinner is not really set free if he is redeemed by God at the first sigh for salvation. God wants to teach us what true salvation is, what His great power is, and how great salvation is. If Pharaoh had let them go straight away, they would have thanked him. Where then would be their honor of God?

It is with the people as with the man in Romans 7. There the experience is described of a man whose soul is awakened by the gospel. Then he discovers the power of sin within him and the impossibility of overcoming sin dwelling in him. The gospel, which first seemed (and is!) a happy message, seems to become a torment for him.

When he comes to the acknowledgment that his struggle against sin in him is a hopeless struggle, he exclaims: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free" (Rom 7:24)? Then he is where he should be, for immediately afterwards comes thanks: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25a). He is ready to believe the gospel in its fullness. Now he is free. Romans 8 describes the situation in which he has arrived (Rom 8:1-3,10-14).

The people must first discover that they have no strength to work out their own deliverance. The same goes for the sinner, who has to learn that he is in the flesh and under the power of satan. God allows this to test the faith of His people and get them used to His way of doing things. He also allows it in order to give a glorious revelation of His power in the area where satan had established his authority.

The slavery of Israel in Egypt is an appropriate type of our slavery to sin (Rom 6:17; Tit 3:3). Being dominated by sin is fatally exhausting. No matter how we beg for relief, it does not come, rather desperation. In the gospel comes relief, deliverance, freedom. That was brought by the Lord Jesus. It is written of Him: "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD"" (Lk 4:18-19).

Verses 20-21 | Moses and Aaron Are Blamed

20 When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. 21 They said to them, "May the LORD look upon you and judge [you], for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Moses and Aaron are blamed. Servants of the Lord should take into account that they are misunderstood, accused, even overloaded with reproach. Moses and Aaron seem to have silently turned away to do the only right thing in this situation: turn to God.

Verses 22-23 | Moses Complains to the LORD

22 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? 23 Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all."

The people grumble at Pharaoh, but also at Moses and Aaron. When Moses brings the matter before the LORD, he expresses his difficulty with the course of his mission. There is unbelief in his voice. No results have been achieved at all. On the contrary, it has all got worse. Moses' eye is no longer focused on the LORD, but on the people. He believed that the people would appreciate his ministry, but is disappointed. But the servant must not look at his field of work, but at his Sender.

Nor does the Lord Jesus get discouraged when the cities in which most of His miracles were done do not repent. He praises His Father (Mt 11:20,25). He does not look at success or at opposition, but at the Father. We must follow His example and keep our eye on Him.

Exodus 6

Verses 1-9 | God Promises to Deliver His People

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land." 2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD; 3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but [by] My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. 4 I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. 5 Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6 Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 7 Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you [for] a possession; I am the LORD.'" 9 So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of [their] despondency and cruel bondage.

The LORD does not blame Moses. He points out to Moses what He will do. Moses is discouraged, because he has seen who Pharaoh is and who the people are. Instead of blaming him, God shows him Who He is. He as it were places Himself before Moses and says: "I am the LORD." By virtue of that Name, Yahweh, He is with His own. That Name means that He is always reliable and true. He, the LORD, also is "God Almighty".

He gives Moses a new impression of Himself and of His goodness, and tells him that He will make Himself known to His people as the LORD. The name 'LORD' is not a new name. It is His Name in connection with man. We see this in Genesis 2, where this name first appears when it comes to His connection with Adam. It is a new name for the relationship with a people, His people. God unfolds this new name to Moses in connection with the plan He shows Moses about the redemption of Israel.

In the name 'LORD' the faithfulness of God to His promises is expressed. The patriarchs were aliens in the land of promise. God had given them His promises. Now He will fulfill these promises. The people will be allowed to take possession of this land. In seven steps God will, "I will", execute this plan (verses 6-8). It underlines that He is a God Who fulfills His promises. He says:

"I will"

1. "bring you out",
2. "deliver you",
3. "redeem you",
4. "take you for My people",
5. "be your God",
6. "bring you to the land",
7. "give it to you [for] a possession".

These seven steps are wedged in between Who He is as the LORD. He stands at the beginning (verse 6), so He begins to speak, and He stands at the end (verse 8). In verse 8, with the statement "I am the LORD", He puts his signature, as it were, under what He has just said.

These seven steps briefly represent the history of Israel from its deliverance from Egypt to its arrival in the promised land. To carry His people out of Egypt and thereby fulfill His plan, God uses His "outstretched arm" (verse 6). This means that He will use His power for this. He confirms that He will then bring His people to the land with an oath, literally by lifting up His hand, which is the gesture of swearing an oath.

After Moses is encouraged, he goes back to the Israelites and tells them the word of God. However, the people are not open to what Moses passes on on behalf of the LORD. They are impatient ["despondency" is literally shortness of spirit or impatient] and unhappy. Impatience is an evil that repeatedly arises in the course of Israel's history. This evil also causes a lot of damage in the life of the Christian.

Verses 10-13 | Moses Has to Go to Pharaoh Again

10 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 11 "Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out of his land." 12 But Moses spoke before the

LORD, saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?" 13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a charge to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

God is not impressed by the reaction of the people. Moses is. He is again discouraged. Again he comes up with the argument that he is unskilled in speech (verse 12; Exo 4:10). Literally it says 'uncircumcised of lips' (cf. Jer 6:10; 9:26). Circumcision is the sign of the covenant, the external mark that a person had to have in order to be a member of God's earthly people (Gen 17:9-14). Moses feels like someone who is lacking something, like a deficient member of God's people, so that he finds himself incapable and unable to speak with power. He feels powerless.

The LORD does not react to it, but commands him to go to the Israelites and to Pharaoh. This command also applies to Aaron whom God gives to Moses for the execution of the command precisely in view of his argument that he cannot speak well (Exo 4:14). He adds the purpose of the assignment: to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Verses 14-25 | Some Genealogies

14 These are the heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben. 15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon. 16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. 17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations. 20 Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the length of Amram's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. 21 The sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri. 22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri. 23 Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 24 The sons of Korah: Assir and Elkanah

and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. 25 Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' [households] of the Levites according to their families.

In the middle of the story, the genealogies of Ruben, Simeon and Levi seem to have a lost place. That is not the case, of course. We can see that God, even though His own are so oppressed, knows them all personally and also their origins. He forgets none.

Only the three oldest sons of Israel are mentioned. Four children of Ruben are mentioned. Of Simeon, six are mentioned. Others are ignored. All attention is drawn to the offspring of the third son, Levi. It is about him and his descendants and especially Moses and Aaron. Therefore the genealogy stops with Levi and his sons to focus all attention on Moses and Aaron.

We'll come across several names later, like Gerson, Kohath and Merari. The most important thing is that from Levi the liberator, Moses, comes forth, while from this tribe also the high priest and all priests come forth. Moses and Aaron will act on behalf of the LORD toward Pharaoh.

Verses 26-27 | Moses and Aaron

26 It was [the same] Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts." 27 They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the sons of Israel from Egypt; it was [the same] Moses and Aaron.

Before God now executes His plans for salvation, Moses and Aaron are confirmed as His executors. Together they are a picture of the Lord Jesus. Moses is the mediator between God and men; he represents God with men. Aaron is the high priest who represents people with God. Both persons – ultimately it is the Lord Jesus (Heb 3:1) – represent the whole people before God. Therefore, the genealogy can end after the mention of Moses and Aaron. By saying "it was [the same] Aaron and Moses" all emphasis is on them both together.

Verses 28-30 | Command Repeated and Objection Repeated

28 Now it came about on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, 29 that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the LORD; speak

to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you.” 30 But Moses said before the LORD, “Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?”

After the interruption for the genealogies the writer takes up the thread in verse 28 to continue the conversation between the LORD and Moses. When the LORD has made it clear who belongs to Him and who will go to Pharaoh on His behalf, there will be a repetition of the command to go back to Pharaoh (verse 29; verse 11) and a repetition of the objection of Moses (verse 30; verse 12).

Before the LORD gives the command again, He says for the third time in this chapter: “I am the LORD” (verses 2,6,29). This is the Name by virtue of which He will now act. The battle between the LORD and Pharaoh can begin. Moses’ objection that he is unskilled in speech is answered by the LORD in the next chapter.

Exodus 7

Verses 1-7 | Israel Brought Out; Egypt Judged

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you [as] God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 2 You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." 6 So Moses and Aaron did [it]; as the LORD commanded them, thus they did. 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

The LORD sends Moses and Aaron with His ultimatum to Pharaoh. The fact that the LORD has made Moses as "God" to Pharaoh means that Moses, God's representative, must act as a judge against Pharaoh. Judges are also called 'gods' (Psa 82:6; Jn 10:34).

The LORD tells Moses what He purposed to do. Moses, in turn, must say it to Aaron, for Aaron is his "prophet", that is, he is the mouthpiece of Moses. God informs His servants to encourage them, strengthen their faith and prepare them for their task. To this end, the book of Revelation has been given to us, Christians. It is given "to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place" (Rev 1:1).

The LORD speaks to the encouragement of Moses about "My signs and My wonders" which He will multiply in the land of Egypt. What for Egypt are "evil things", are signs and miracles for God's people that indicate that their salvation is near. This is also the case for the Christian who sees how the plagues of the book of Revelation are already getting a kind of pre-fulfillment in our days. From this we can see that the coming of the Lord is near.

God could have allowed Israel to leave without the plagues. He could have killed Pharaoh without a doubt. But He wants to show through a clear testimony of His glory and majesty Who He is Who calls His people.

A beautiful description of this can be found in Psalm 105:

*“He sent Moses His servant,
[And] Aaron, whom He had chosen.
They performed His wondrous acts among them,
And miracles in the land of Ham.
He sent darkness and made [it] dark;
And they did not rebel against His words.
He turned their waters into blood
And caused their fish to die.
Their land swarmed with frogs
[Even] in the chambers of their kings.
He spoke, and there came a swarm of flies
[And] gnats in all their territory.
He gave them hail for rain,
[And] flaming fire in their land.
He struck down their vines also and their fig trees,
And shattered the trees of their territory.
He spoke, and locusts came,
And young locusts, even without number,
And ate up all vegetation in their land,
And ate up the fruit of their ground.
He also struck down all the firstborn in their land,
The first fruits of all their vigor.” (Psa 105:26-36)*

Verses 8-13 | A Miracle for Pharaoh

8 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9 “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw [it] down before Pharaoh, [that] it may become a serpent.’” 10 So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh also called for [the] wise men and [the] sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their

secret arts. 12 For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Before the plagues occur, the miracle that Pharaoh asks, gives him as it were a last chance to meet God's demand. But he doesn't listen. On the contrary, he wants to destroy the power of the miracle by letting his magicians imitate it. Imitating something that comes from God has always been a success story of satan. Many have already been misled and are still being misled every day.

The turning of the staff into a serpent is an introduction to the plagues. This time it is the staff of Aaron which causes this sign for Pharaoh. First it was the staff of Moses, and he used it for the people (Exo 4:1-5). Because the staff of Aaron is now being used, the sign has a slightly different meaning. The staff of Aaron will sprout (Num 17:8). This is why the power of life from the dead, the power of the resurrection, is attached to his staff.

Aaron is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the risen Lord. Aaron comes to Pharaoh as the one in whose hand the staff is. He has, as it were, been given the staff that has returned in the hand of Moses and is now exercising his authority. We see with the Lord Jesus that after His resurrection He says that to Him has been given "all authority ... in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18).

We do not yet see this in reality, but we do see it by faith (Heb 2:8-9). When we look at the world, it seems as if the devil is in control. However, that is in appearance only. The authority is in the hands of the Lord Jesus and He gives it to whom He will (Rom 13:1; Pro 21:1; Dan 2:21a). He is above all authorities and eventually devours all authorities. This introduction to the plagues shows us at the same time the outcome of the plagues: God is victorious, He destroys all opposition.

Paul mentions the names of the magicians of Pharaoh. He points to these magicians, because in the lives of certain nominal Christians the same corrupt traits of character are revealed as in these magicians: "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these [men] also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith" (2Tim 3:8). These are people who discredit the Christian faith, of whom Paul says to Timothy: "Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2Tim 3:5).

The plagues affect Egypt, which represents the world. By mentioning the magicians in 2 Timothy 3 we see that the plagues also relate to professing Christianity. This is because professing Christendom is linked with the world. In this way, professing Christianity shares in the judgment that God makes to come on the world. This is why the call comes to the true Christian: “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness” (2Tim 2:19b; cf. Rev 18:4).

We live “in the last days” (2Tim 3:1). These are the days in which the magicians of Pharaoh with their magic try to explain away the power of God’s Word. At this stage there is no distinction between Israel and Egypt (Exo 8:22), between the world and God’s people. That is why we also have to deal with it.

Verses 14-18 | Announcement of the First Plague

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent. 16 You shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.” 17 Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. 18 The fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.”’”

Before looking at the individual plagues, first a general introduction to the plagues. The first nine plagues can be divided into three groups of three plagues. The tenth plague stands alone. At the first, fourth, and seventh plague, Moses must go to Pharaoh early in the morning (Exo 7:15; 8:20; 9:13). This refers every time to a new beginning. The third, sixth and ninth plagues come each without prior warning.

The plagues 1-3 come all three from the earth and happen by the staff of Aaron. The plague is affecting the Egyptians as well as the people of Israel. In these first three plagues the Egyptian magicians play a role. They try to

imitate the plagues of God. As said, because of the mention of these magicians in 2 Timothy 3, especially these plagues have a special message for us, who live in the last days of Christianity.

The plagues 4-6 happen without mentioning the staff of Moses or the staff of Aaron. Also their origin – from heaven or from earth – is not mentioned. It simply says that the LORD does it (Exo 8:24; 9:6). With the sixth plague, Moses is the executor. He scatters ash from the oven into the air. Israel remains free from these plagues (Exo 8:22). Egyptian magicians cannot imitate these plagues.

The plagues 7-9 do not affect Israel either. They come directly from heaven over Egypt and are executed by the staff of Moses.

Almost all of the plagues we find here we find in Revelation also. We find therein “the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world” (Rev 3:10), not only upon Israel (Jer 30:7). In Revelation 16 it says that these are the plagues of God and especially also about professing Christianity (Rev 16:9). In the seven bowls in Revelation 16, many of the plagues that stroke Egypt are found.

We now continue to follow the reports of the plagues. Moses is given the task to go to Pharaoh in the morning with the message to let God’s people go to serve Him in the wilderness (verse 16). God now claims the right to His people. He wants them to serve Him and not Pharaoh. Pharaoh wants it the other way around: he wants the people to serve him and not God.

The LORD lets Moses announce the first plague because of the unrelenting heart of Pharaoh. Therefore Moses must take the staff of Aaron, the staff that has been turned into a serpent, and strike the water of the Nile with it. The water of the Nile will then turn into blood and become undrinkable (cf. Rev 16:3-4).

The Nile is the idol of the Egyptians. From it they derive all their wealth. The fish of the Nile serves as food (Num 11:5a). The plague will kill the fish and turn their source of wealth into a stinking river. If God is kept out of the blessing we enjoy, it can just happen that the blessing turns into a curse and that life (water) turns into death (blood). It is God’s purpose by this that man should acknowledge that He speaks, just as Pharaoh will know from this judgment of the LORD that He is the LORD.

Verses 19-25 | The First Plague: Water Becomes Blood

19 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there will be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in [vessels of] wood and in [vessels of] stone.'" 20 So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that [was] in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that [was] in the Nile was turned to blood. 21 The fish that [were] in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. 22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. 23 Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. 24 So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. 25 Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Moses and Aaron do just as God has said. Aaron stretches his staff not only over the Nile, but over the waters of Egypt. The Nile is mentioned separately from the waters as a target of the plague. The Nile is worshiped by the Egyptians under a wide variety of names. It represents all that is good. God destroys this great power on which the Egyptians rely. He strikes them in what gives them pleasure and prosperity. The fish die, the Nile starts to stink, and the water is no longer drinkable.

Water speaks of what invigorates and gives life. Blood that has been shed speaks of death. In God's Word, the Nile stands for earthly blessings that are enjoyed without thanks to God in any way. Enjoying all kinds of blessings in this way can only lead to death, because everything that is apart from God is dead and works death.

Life on earth can give opportunity "to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25), but its end is death. Its stench fills the air. In today's society, we are increasingly observing its forerunners. Man wallows in prosperity and perishes in it. The depravity of his thinking is taking on ever coarser proportions. What man thinks up is becoming more and more repulsive.

The magicians can imitate what Moses did, but they cannot take away the ailment. They only make the plague worse. It can be seen in politics and in society where excuses are always sought for the follies that man commits. The solutions that are offered only make the ailment worse. For example, pregnancy is a blessing from God, but it is not considered that way in the corrupt thinking of man who wants to be independent of God. Man wants to be able to intervene, both in the 'making' of life through, for example, test tube fertilization and in the removal of what is not desired through abortion. The result is repulsive to all who love God.

The plague lasts for "seven days", which means a fullness of time determined by God. Of any reaction of Pharaoh, we read nothing.

Exodus 8

Verses 1-4 | Announcement of the Second Plague

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 2 But if you refuse to let [them] go, behold, I will smite your whole territory with frogs. 3 The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls. 4 So the frogs will come up on you and your people and all your servants."'"

Moses is again given the task to go to Pharaoh to command him in the name of the LORD to let His people go so that they may serve Him. If Pharaoh refuses, the second plague must be announced. From the Nile will come countless frogs that will flood the land.

Frogs are considered sacred by the Egyptians and treated with respect. They should therefore not be killed. These idols now take the form of a plague under the judgmental hand of God.

Verses 5-7 | The Second Plague: Frogs

5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh does not listen and the plague comes. The frogs come from the Nile, the symbol of natural blessings. What God has meant to be a blessing becomes a plague. The frogs are a picture of unclean spirits, especially of sexual impurity: "And I saw [coming] out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them togeth-

er for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")" (Rev 16:13-15).

The love between husband and wife in marriage is a natural blessing that God has given to mankind. That blessing has become a curse. Examples for instance are homosexual relationships, non-marital or pre-marital sexual intercourse, pornography in magazines and via television and the Internet, sex shops and sex clubs.

This plague enters the homes of the Egyptians and also those of the Israelites. There is not put a division yet, for God puts that division from the fourth plague. This plague overruns the world and also invades the homes of Christians. Sometimes unsolicited via advertising leaflets through the mailbox, but unfortunately also because the homes are open to this. The impurity comes into the bedrooms, into the beds. The warning in Hebrews 13 is important and significant in this context (Heb 13:4).

The frogs come into the kneading bowls, indicating that it is mixed with the food. This is the kind of food that is passed on to the public through the mass media. The consumption of this contaminated food cannot fail. Gay marriages and their blessing in the church have become practice. He, who is not practicing it himself, justifies it. Love is from God, isn't it?

This impurity is the result of not acknowledging God. Therefore He gives a plague like this. The application for our days is clear (Rom 1:24-28 and note the word "therefore"). Man who sidelines God calls this plague upon himself. Man who does not recognize God dishonors himself. The lusts that he seeks to satisfy, results from his abandonment of God. Returning to Him is the only thing that helps to eradicate the plague.

The magicians do the same with their secret arts and also let frogs come up on the land of Egypt. They cannot remove the plague, they can only make it worse. In the application we see this with so-called Christian leaders who parrot the philosophers. What the Bible calls impurity, they call a 'natural, healthy development'. The power of the Word of God is taken away and the plague only gets worse.

Verses 8-11 | Pharaoh Asks for Intercession

8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the LORD that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, [that] they may be left only in the Nile?" 10 Then he said, "Tomorrow." So he said, "[May it be] according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. 11 The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile."

To this plague Pharaoh does respond. He calls Moses and Aaron and asks for prayer that the frogs will disappear. He claims that he will then let the people go. It is a striking proof of grace that Moses says to Pharaoh that he may decide when he will pray. Pharaoh determines that moment to be tomorrow. Perhaps he thinks that by getting a bit of delay the frogs will disappear by themselves.

Many people who are in need will not immediately admit that it is God's hand that weighs heavily on them. They postpone a decision for a while, hoping that the pressure 'tomorrow' will be a bit lighter.

Verses 12-15 | The Prayer of Moses Answered

12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. 13 The LORD did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. 14 So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Moses calls to the LORD, and the LORD does according to the word of Moses. Because Pharaoh himself has determined the time of the removal of the frogs, and it also happens at that time, it must be clear to him that he is dealing with the LORD Himself. Therefore, he is fully accountable that he hardens his heart again when the plague is taken away.

That is how man is by nature. Those who resist the clear speaking of God are even more difficult to convince when God next speaks. God has spo-

ken in judgment, but also in grace through the prayer of Moses. There is, however, nothing by which Pharaoh's heart is softened. For the awakened Christian, these things are signs that show that God brings His judgments to the world. The coming of the Lord is near.

Verses 16-19 | The Third Plague: Gnats

16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" 17 They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

The third plague comes, this time without any further announcement, because Aaron stretches his staff and strikes the dust of the earth. The plague affects all people and beasts. The magicians try to imitate this plague, but they don't succeed. When life is brought forth from the dead dust, the power of satan ends. The magicians must acknowledge that this is the work of God.

The expression "the finger of God" is also found in Luke 11 (Lk 11:20). The parallel text in Matthew 12 shows that "the finger of God" means the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:28). Of the law it is said that it is "written by the finger of God" (Exo 31:18; Deu 9:10). There, "the finger of God" shows the authority of His Word. In Psalm 8 God's creative power is described as "the work of Your fingers" (Psa 8:3).

Only God the Holy Spirit is able to give new life in the heart of a dead sinner, a man formed of dust from the ground. He will also "give life" to the "mortal bodies" of the believers "through His Spirit" Who dwells in them (Rom 8:11). That will happen at the return of the Lord Jesus to take the believers to Himself. He will do this by changing the living believers and by raising the deceased believers: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1Cor 15:51-52).

The gnats come out of the dust. In Psalm 22, dust is linked to death (Psa 22:15c). After man had sinned, God pronounced the judgment of death: "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19b). The dust becomes gnats, which are insects that suck out blood, life, from man. Our complicated society is full of gnats. Countless people are anxious, confused, nervous, suspicious. The psychiatric hospitals are becoming increasingly full. Spiritual tensions are increasing hand over hand. Many are driven to suicide. Life no longer makes sense for them, it no longer offers a future. The gnats do their destructive work.

Here, too, there is no distinction between Egypt and Israel. Many believers get swept up in the maelstrom of life. For them, life becomes an agitated existence with nerve-wracking, excessive efforts and torments. The peace and quiet have disappeared. Here too, the gnats do their destructive work.

There is a way to prevent the gnats from feasting on our blood. On that the Lord Jesus points when He says: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56). Those who find their daily rest and calmness in the death of the Lord Jesus, who take the time to occupy themselves with Him and His work on the cross, remain beyond the reach of the gnats. This also requires a certain amount of effort: you have to make time for it in your agenda and take action to spend time with Him Who said: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).

Verses 20-21 | Announcement of the Fourth Plague

20 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he comes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 21 For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they [dwell].

Moses is ordered to go to Pharaoh early in the morning. He will be found near the water as usual. Moses must stand before Pharaoh, he must block

him on his wicked way, without any fear of this mighty man. Again he must command him on behalf of the LORD to let His people go to serve Him. If Pharaoh does not do this, it will result in a new plague.

That the LORD sends Moses early in the morning to the Nile to stand there before Pharaoh, means that not only Moses gets up early, but also Pharaoh. Pharaoh undoubtedly does this to perform idolatrous worship at the Nile. People of the world are sometimes also disciplined when it comes to performing all kinds of rituals to which they attach their happiness. They sometimes make efforts, by which believers, those who say they know the Lord, can take an example from.

Again and again Pharaoh finds Moses and Aaron in his way. He will certainly have seen them as people who plunge Egypt into misfortune. This is also how Ahab later looks at Elijah (1Kgs 18:17). Ahab and Pharaoh both forget that they themselves drag the people they are responsible for into ruin.

Verses 22-23 | A Division Between God's People and Egypt

22 But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. 23 I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign will occur.”

This plague has a peculiarity that is missing with the previous plagues. From this plague God sets apart His people from Egypt (verse 22). The setting apart is a deliverance. God calls this setting apart a “sign” (verse 23). If Satan hates anything, it is that God's people keep to the separation God has made for His people from the world.

Verse 24 | The fourth plague: flies

24 Then the LORD did so. And there came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of flies in all the land of Egypt.

The flies, possibly a mixture of all kinds of vermin, transmit all kinds of diseases. This pollutes and corrupts people's lives. As an application for our time we can think of all kinds of irritations, jealousy, harassment,

thwarting each other in all possible ways. These things destroy the atmosphere between people and make life unbearable, like loud music at the neighbors, traffic misbehavior, challenging behavior in the shop and so many other things which cause irritation.

Believers will not suffer from these things if they really behave as God's people, as God's children. Unfortunately, how often do we participate in slanderous talk about others, or say things behind someone's back?

Pharaoh sees that this plague makes the society of his people very difficult. It is the same with "senseless" violence. Everyone is calling out "this shouldn't happen again" and they organize protest marches to indicate that this 'plague' must stop. But no man puts his hand into his own bosom, where the real evil is.

Verses 25-27 | Moses Rejects the Compromise

25 Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land." 26 But Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not then stone us? 27 We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us."

For the first time Pharaoh makes an offer to let the people go to serve God. However, he does attach a condition to this. That condition means that the people serve God in his land, Egypt. He wants to keep the distance between him and the people of God as small as possible. He says as it were: "Serve me and God."

Even if a believer takes seriously his separation from the world, satan comes with his proposals, as Pharaoh does here. He wants to talk about that. Four times he proposes a compromise (verses 25,28; Exo 10:7-9,24). He will dispute every centimeter of space. But God and Moses, and everyone who belongs to God through faith in the Lord Jesus, will be satisfied with nothing but clear separation from the world which crucified Christ.

This compromise is unacceptable to Moses. Whoever is truly a child of God cannot possibly stay in the world. By baptism he testifies that he wants to

be free from it. Only then is he really free to serve God. He then, in picture, has passed through the Red Sea and has come into the wilderness.

The answer of Moses speaks of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: the people must go into the wilderness a three days' journey. The service that the people want to keep before their God is an abomination for the world. If the Egyptians see the Israelites slaughter a bull or cow, animals that they consider sacred, they will stone the Israelites. Any sacrifice to God that a believer may be required to make, but which an unbeliever claims for himself as his right or entitlement, arouses that person's anger.

Verse 28 | Second Compromise Proposal

28 Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Make supplication for me."

Pharaoh then comes up with a second cunning offer. They may go into the wilderness, but not too far. They must remain under his sphere of influence. So not the three days' journey into the wilderness. In picture it means: not a service to God in connection with and based on the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

As long as a believer does not live in accordance with the judgment on the cross over his sins and in the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, satan will let him go. As believers, we must ask ourselves: Is the world really crucified to me and I to the world? For Paul this is so (Gal 6:14).

After his offer, Pharaoh asks Moses for the second time to make supplication for him.

Verses 29-32 | Moses Makes Supplication for Pharaoh

29 Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you, and I shall make supplication to the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow; only do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully again in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. 31 The LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh,

from his servants and from his people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

Moses does not respond to Pharaoh's proposal, he doesn't pay attention to it. We must also serve God without any compromise and without any influence from the world. The journey of three days into the wilderness must be made.

Moses is willing to make supplication for Pharaoh again. With this he is in line with the great patience of God. Once again he appeals to the conscience of Pharaoh. More and more it becomes clear how adamant his heart is. Although there really is nothing left of the plague, showing how effective the supplication of Moses is and how complete the answer by the LORD is, Pharaoh still dares not let the people go.

Exodus 9

Verse 1 | Moses Must Return to Pharaoh

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

Before the fifth plague comes, Moses is ordered to go back to Pharaoh. On behalf of the LORD, the God of the Hebrews (cf. Exo 7:16), he must tell Pharaoh to let His people go. The name "God of the Hebrews" emphasizes that God's people are a people 'from the other side', which is the meaning of the name 'Hebrew'. A Hebrew is a pilgrim on earth, for he belongs to another country.

Verses 2-3 | Announcement of the Fifth Plague

2 For if you refuse to let [them] go and continue to hold them, 3 behold, the hand of the LORD will come [with] a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.

Refusal will result in livestock pestilence by the hand of the LORD. This plague affects the Egyptians in their possessions. The Israelites use the cattle in the service of the LORD. Especially the cattle and the flocks are used to sacrifices to Him. The Egyptians use all this for themselves.

The man of the world not only uses the blessings of nature, such as the sun and rain for his own benefit – they do not thank God for it – but they will also sacrifice nothing of what they possess to God, for they use everything for themselves. It is to the man of the world an abomination (Exo 8:26) to see that the believer puts everything in the service of God.

Verse 4 | The LORD Makes a Distinction

4 But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.""

The distinction between God's people and Egypt is again made, as we have seen before (Exo 8:22). Children of God should treat their possessions very differently from the children of the devil. They may use everything and do all for the glory of God (1Cor 10:31). The distinction God makes must be put into practice by His children. If not, they will feel something of the abomination of the Egyptians in their hearts. They will then withdraw certain things from God's right to them.

Verses 5-7 | The Fifth Plague: Livestock Pestilence

5 The LORD set a definite time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." 6 So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died. 7 Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

There is again a definite time at which God's actions will become noticeable. A sudden outbreak of livestock pestilence will be proof that the LORD is at work. The search for a natural explanation for livestock pestilence is folly. Yet today this happens on all fronts when a person's property is affected and loses its value. Wealth just gets wings and disappears like snow in the sun. However, one will not turn to God who speaks because of the heavy losses one suffers.

Not one animal of the livestock of the Israelites died. Man who trusts in God is not dependent on his bank and insurance, on fluctuations in the economy, but on God. Pharaoh is informed by servants of the distinction between his people and God's people, but is not convinced. His evil heart is absolutely stubborn. He is not willing to acknowledge the LORD.

Verses 8-11 | The Sixth Plague: Boils

8 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt." 10 So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.

11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.

Like the third plague, the sixth plague comes without any announcement. Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh again, so that, according to God's command, they can "throw ... in the sight of Pharaoh" the soot toward the sky. By doing so they bring the soot, as it were, into connection with God, Who will let it descend upon people and animals and turn it into boils.

On humans and animals throughout Egypt, but not in Goshen, boils break out with sores. For the Egyptians, who pay special care to the appearance, this is an appalling humiliation. The purity and beauty of the body is a part of their religion.

This plague once again proves the worthlessness of their religion and the helplessness of their idols. Internal contaminants, infections, break outwards in the form of sores. It is a picture of the sinful nature of man who, in terrible deeds, makes his actions visible (cf. Mt 15:19).

The boils on man and beast are caused by soot thrown toward the sky from the kiln. Soot speaks of death as the result of burning in a kiln. Until then, Egypt has been a fire oven of oppression for Israel. The plague that comes upon Egypt has its origin in their abuse of God's people.

Soot, the consequence of consuming fire, is an evidence of God's consuming judgment (Heb 12:29). This judgment is already finding its way and is a precursor to the final judgment that will take place when the books are opened before the great white throne (Rev 20:11-15). Then will be revealed all the sins which all the unbelievers are guilty of. Convinced of their guilt, they will be referred to hell by the righteous Judge, the Man Christ Jesus. All the plagues they have caused shall be their portion forever.

In the land of Goshen, where Israel lives, no boils break out. The bodies remain unscathed. This does not mean that sin cannot break out in a believer, but he will confess his sin in self-judgment before God. If he doesn't, the plague will disfigure him. This disfigurement can literally be physical, but also caused because of his horrible behavior. The LORD warns His people that He will smite them "with the boils of Egypt" (Deu 28:27) if they disobey Him.

This plague also seems to refer to the origin of the following three plagues. The soot is thrown skyward. The next plagues, hail and grasshoppers, descend from the sky and the sun in the sky is darkened.

Also with the magicians, Jannes and Jambres, the sores break out. It is a confirmation of the word of Paul who names these magicians by name and says of them: “Their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes’s and Jambres’s folly was also” (2Tim 3:9). The corrupt actions of the nominal Christian false teachers will be evident to all in their pernicious and stinking practices.

Pharaoh’s servants are as hardened as Pharaoh himself. They are punished with him, just as later also the magician Elymas is punished by Paul because he does not cease “to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10). He tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith when he sought to hear the Word of God. Paul smites him with blindness, so that he wanders around like a fool. “And he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:11).

Verse 12 | The Heart of Pharaoh Hardened

12 And the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

Many times Pharaoh has not let his heart softened, this time it is no longer possible. The verdict of the hardening has entered into force. He has defied the righteous Judge to the end: now is his judgment sealed. God does not let himself be mocked.

This is a serious example for a man who has often heard the gospel, but refuses to repent. The hardening by God only happens after man has radically rejected the testimony of God and there is no longer any reason to believe that he will come to repentance. Moreover, we cannot determine the time of the judgment or when the hardening will occur. Our task is to preach the gospel to everyone.

God has hardened the wicked heathen after they rejected God’s testimony in creation (Rom 1:24,26,28). God will harden Christ rejecting unbelievers because they have not accepted the love of truth to be saved (2Thes 2:11-12).

Verses 13-18 | Announcement of the Seventh Plague

13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 14 For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. 15 For [if by] now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. 16 But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. 17 Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go. 18 Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail, such as has not been [seen] in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

The seventh plague is announced as the first of the last series of three plagues. Judgments increase in severity and intensity. Three times Moses has to stretch out his staff and thus let judgments come directly from heaven (verse 22; Exo 10:12,21).

Moses has to go back to Pharaoh early in the morning to call him to let God's people go. If Pharaoh does not listen, God will, He says, "send all My plagues on you". He will do this by bringing down a very heavy hail. God reserves the hail for the day of wrath (Job 38:22-23). Instead of an invigorating, mild, blessing rain from heaven, as the land of Canaan knows it (Deu 11:10-12), there is a falling down of hard, all-destroying hailstones. The same plague will strike the world in the end time (Rev 16:21).

God could have already wiped out Pharaoh because of his stubborn opposition. He does not do that, but let Pharaoh serve as a means by which the power of God becomes visible and His Name is proclaimed throughout the earth.

Paul refers to what the LORD says here of Pharaoh to establish the sovereignty of God: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth" (Rom 9:17). He even says there that God "raised ... up" Pharaoh for that purpose. Does that mean that God made him to be born for that purpose? No at all. 'Raising up' means

that God has governed the history of Pharaoh's life in such a way that Pharaoh shows what is in his heart toward God. It clearly is the history of rebellion against Him. It also appears that there is no inclination whatsoever to listen to the warnings He sends in the various plagues that affect the land.

Verses 19-21 | How to Escape the Plague

19 Now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and beast that is found in the field and is not brought home, when the hail comes down on them, will die.”” 20 The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses; 21 but he who paid no regard to the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

In His grace God, because of the severity of the plague, gives an indication of how to protect oneself against the coming disaster. The shelter is experienced by anyone who “feared the word of the LORD”. For the first time we read about a fear of the LORD among the Egyptians.

The fear or reverence of what the Lord has said, the recognition of His rights, is the means by which people can be saved, as we also see in the proclamation of the eternal gospel in view of the judgments: “And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters” (Rev 14:6-7).

Verses 22-26 | The Seventh Plague: Hail

22 Now the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt, on man and on beast and on every plant of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.” 23 Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. 24 So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 The hail

struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel [were], there was no hail.

The judgments affect the whole land of Egypt in all their intensity. God sends down from “the storehouses of hail” the hail which He has reserved in it “for the day of war and battle” (Job 38:22-23), the day which has dawned for Egypt. Only in Goshen it doesn’t hail.

The world will be smitten by many judgments, including those of a great hail (Rev 16:21). However, the believer is kept “from the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Rev 3:10). This keeping is done by the Lord Jesus who takes up the church before the judgments erupt over the world.

Verses 27-30 | Pharaoh Asks for Intercession Again

27 Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. 28 Make supplication to the LORD, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.” 29 Moses said to him, “As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s. 30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God.”

Pharaoh lets Moses and Aaron call. For the first time, he acknowledges that he has sinned. But it is a confession that arises only from the consequences of his actions. There is no question of any self-judgment. It is similar to the words “I have sinned” of Saul (1Sam 15:24) and of Judas (Mt 27:4). This kind of repentance has no value to God. It is not the repentance of a broken and crushed heart. Therefore Pharaoh dies in the Red Sea and Saul and Judas commit suicide.

With David and the prodigal son we hear the same words (2Sam 12:13; Lk 15:18), but the difference from Pharaoh, Saul and Judas is enormous. With David and the prodigal son is spoken of a sorrow that is according to God that produces a repentance, leading to salvation as a consequence (2Cor

7:10). Such sorrow is completely absent in the case of Pharaoh, and also in the case of Saul and Judas.

Although Moses knows that Pharaoh will not let the people go and there is no real fear of the LORD in him, he promises to pray for him. It is an example for us to pray for those for whom we have little or no hope that they will subject to the Lord. Moses also says how he will pray: by spreading out his hands to the LORD, that is with the desire to receive the request that he had made.

The purpose of his prayer for Pharaoh is that Pharaoh, even if he does not repent, will know that the earth belongs to the LORD. In this conviction that He is the sovereign Lord, however much others defy Him, we must also pray, for all who defy Him must come to know that. One day they will also have to acknowledge it (Phil 2:10-11).

Verses 31-32 | Flax, Barley, Wheat, Spelt

31 (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. 32 But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they [ripen] late.)

Also in nature there is a distinction between death by judgment and being spared from it. What has already come up from the earth perishes; what is still hidden in the ground is spared to come up later. Listening to God's voice in the plagues will provide food for those who repent. However, if they remain unrepentant, the food will be eaten by the locusts at the next plague.

Verses 33-35 | Moses Prays to the LORD

33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the LORD; and the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth. 34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Moses prays and the plague stops. Like Elijah, Moses also uses the power of prayer to open and close heaven (Jam 5:17-18; cf. Rev 11:6). Then it turns

out for the umpteenth time that Pharaoh is stubborn. He continues to sin. He acts entirely according to his evil nature. His hardened heart is evident as he keeps the Israelites in slavery, despite all the speaking of God.

Pharaoh's attitude is no surprise to God. He said it in advance. Yet God withdraws His hand from Pharaoh at the intercession of Moses. God is never impatient, not even in case of open revolt. He patiently waits for His time.

Exodus 10

Verses 1-2 | The LORD Has Hardened the Hearts

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, 2 and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

The eighth plague is a special sign for the Israelites. On this basis they must tell the generations to come what God has done to Egypt. By this the Israelites will know "that I am the LORD".

It is remarkable that the prophet Joel describes a plague of locusts and also mentions that the account of this event should be passed on to the generations to come: "Tell your sons about it, and [let] your sons [tell] their sons, and their sons the next generation" (Joel 1:3). Joel's prophecy also shows that this plague has a prophetic meaning. In Joel 2, the plague of locusts appears to be a reference to the Assyrian army. They will overwhelm and destroy Israel and make it waste, like a swarm of locusts eat and destroy a land. It is a plague appointed by God, just as in Egypt.

In Revelation 9 locusts are connected to demonic powers (Rev 9:3). These powers are manifesting themselves with increasing strength in the world. An example is the unprecedented success of 'Harry Potter' in book and film form. Through this and similar actions of today's 'locusts', the last remainders of God's truth are robbed from the hearts and these are made waste and empty. Thus hearts of people become a breeding ground for all kinds of occultism where no trace of 'green' as the fruit of God's work can be seen anymore.

Making known to our children the plagues that will strike the world will warn them to keep themselves separated from the world. We must not only pass on these histories to our children as factual knowledge, but also point out to them that God is at work (cf. Psalms 78:3-4). He controls everything to attain His final goal.

Verses 3-6 | Announcement of the Eighth Plague

3 Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 4 For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. 5 They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field. 6 Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, [something] which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

For the seventh time there is the call: "Let my people go, that they may serve Me" (Exo 5:1; 7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1; 10:3). In case of refusal there will be locusts, in unprecedented numbers. A single locust is insignificant, makes no impression at all, and can be easily trampled to death. Ten of the twelve Israelite spies, in their unbelief, felt this way toward the giants in Canaan (Num 13:33). But in large numbers locusts are overwhelming and devastating (cf. Jdg 6:5; 7:12).

After Moses has delivered his message, he turns around resolutely and leaves Pharaoh. He is not waiting for an answer.

Verses 7-11 | Announcement of the Eighth Plague

7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" 8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?" 9 Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." 10 Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. 11 Not so! Go now, the men [among you], and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire." So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

It seems as if Pharaoh must be persuaded to avert this plague, so much is his heart hardened. He listens to his servants, and sends for Moses and

Aaron. Pharaoh wants to let them go, at least that's how it seems. However, he imposes an unacceptable condition on the departure of the Israelites. This condition also shows how cunning he is.

Pharaoh is not waiting for an answer to his offer. He let Moses and Aaron be chased away. He knows that his proposal would be rejected by them without any form of protest. This chasing away shows that there is no trace of sincerity in him. The judgment that has been announced is therefore rightly carried out.

This trick of Pharaoh, his third one, has to do with the relationship between parents and children. He wants to let the men go, but keep the children as hostages in Egypt. If the parents have celebrated the feast in the wilderness, they will return to Egypt because of their children. His proposal also comes down to the fact that he drives a wedge between parents and children.

Satan is doing the same now. He wants to allow the parents to occupy themselves with the things of the Lord and the Word and go to meetings where God's Word is preached. But the children are not allowed to participate. But God wants the believers and their children to serve Him in the wilderness. If Satan succeeds in holding the children, there is a good chance that the parents will return to the world and to the search for worldly things.

If Satan gets the youth in his grip, the testimony of God is lost. However, if serving God and the meetings, wherever they are held, are really a feast, as Moses says here, then we will gladly take our children with us and they will also be glad to be there.

Verses 12-15 | The Eighth Plague: Locusts

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, [even] all that the hail has left." 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. 14 The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; [they were] very numerous. There had never been so

[many] locusts, nor would there be so [many] again. 15 For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt.

The LORD commands Moses to stretch his hand over Egypt. Then Moses stretches out his staff. Not his hand, but the staff of God in his hand makes the plague come. An east wind brings an unequalled number of locusts over Egypt. It is the army of the LORD (Joel 2:11). Everything that has not yet been destroyed by previous judgments is now being eaten. In all of Egypt there is no green left.

Verses 16-20 | Pharaoh Asks for Intercession Again

16 Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. 17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me." 18 He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. 19 So the LORD shifted [the wind] to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. 20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

This time Pharaoh is in a hurry to summon Moses and Aaron. Again the confession comes over his lips: "I have sinned." He even asks for forgiveness. He sees that death has entered his land. But the time for repentance is over. His incorrigibility has already proved itself. He has let his appointed time pass by (Jer 46:17). He did not recognize the time of his visitation (Lk 19:44).

God is perfectly righteous in the judgment of the hardening. Yet He takes the plague away on the basis of Moses' prayer. All locusts die in the Red Sea, where later Pharaoh and his riders will also die. There are no locusts left. What a testimony to His power!

Verses 21-23 | The Ninth Plague: Darkness

21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be

felt.” 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. 23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Like the third and the sixth plague, the ninth plague, the darkness, comes without announcement. Like other plagues, this plague is also a revelation of God’s power against the idols of Egypt. Here the principal god, the sun (Ra), the source of light, warmth and life, is completely overpowered by God’s power and shrouded in darkness. The darkness is that great that it is impossible to see anyone else; it is not even possible to move. In complete darkness, there is no orientation at all.

This plague also occurs in the final judgments on the world (Rev 16:10). It is the plague that strikes the wicked (Job 18:5-6) and to which, if he dies in his wickedness, there will be no end. He will be endlessly “in the outer darkness” (Mt 8:12; 2Pet 2:17; Rev 20:10).

In this plague we have an illustration of man without God, for he is darkened in the understanding (Eph 4:18). Also his “foolish heart was darkened” (Rom 1:21). A man without God goes his way by groping. He doesn’t know where he comes from or where he is going. However God can still shine in his heart “to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2Cor 4:6). When the church is raptured, man will be completely delivered to satan and his demons, the powers of darkness.

In one place there is light today and that is with the people of God. That was also the case in Egypt: “But all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings” (verse 23b). Spiritually, Christ was that light as the Passover Lamb. During the three days of darkness the Israelites had a lamb in their houses (Exo 12:3). This reminds us of Revelation 21, where it is said of the new Jerusalem: “Its lamp [is] the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). How good it is when Christ, the true Passover (1Cor 5:7b), is central in the homes of God’s children.

The Lord Jesus is “the Light of the world” (Jn 8:12a). Thus He came into the world. Whereas normally darkness disappears when light comes, the arrival of the Light of the world has proven how great the darkness is, for light has been rejected! However the individual who believes in Him will

not remain in darkness (Jn 12:46). Children of God are also children of light and are therefore called to walk “as children of Light” (Eph 5:8).

Verses 24-29 | The Last Compromise Rejected

24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, “Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you.” 25 But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice [them] to the LORD our God. 26 Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD.” 27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!” 29 Moses said, “You are right; I shall never see your face again!”

Pharaoh calls to Moses again. He has another proposal. They are all allowed to go, only they have to leave their flocks and their herds. Moses doesn’t let himself be deceived this time either. How could they sacrifice to God if they do not take their livestock? He is not prepared for the slightest compromise: there shall not even be a hoof of the livestock left behind in Egypt.

Christ has redeemed us and thereby has a right to all that we are and possess. This total possession must be for His praise and for His service. He must be allowed to dispose of it freely. We must not leave anything of it in the world. This is only possible if through the death and the resurrection of Christ we have truly entered a new world where we are aware of what service to Him is all about.

If there is no other way, satan wants us to go and serve God. But what is service to God worth if in our lives no spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanks are found and also our possessions are not sacrificed to Him (Heb 13:15-16)? Many Christians believe that the highest service to God is charity or the preaching of the gospel. If, however, no spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanks are made, satan has succeeded in his deceit.

We do not read that the Father seeks all kinds of Christian activity, although He appreciates and will reward it. We read that He seeks worship-

ers who worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24). Above all, His heart desires that our hearts go out to Him and His gift in Christ.

Pharaoh is at the end of all his tricks. He bursts into anger against Moses. He never wants to see Moses again. "That will happen", Moses says in peace and quiet. If Pharaoh later calls to Moses and Aaron again (Exo 12:31), it is in a completely different situation and relation.

Exodus 11

Verses 1-3 | There Will Be One More Plague

1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely. 2 Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold." 3 The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses [himself] was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, [both] in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

In a kind of parenthesis, we read in these verses what God said to Moses before he goes to Pharaoh for the last time. In the last plague God Himself will descend to judge. This means the final judgment. The result will be that Pharaoh will drive out the people as a whole from the land completely.

Before they leave, the Israelites have to ask for all kinds of articles from the Egyptians. They will need them for their service to the LORD. The LORD will work so that they will receive these articles. It is the unpaid wages of all years of toil that they and their ancestors did as slaves in Egypt.

For Moses, great esteem has arisen. The Egyptians see him as the processor of the plagues, someone whom they have to treat with respect. Moses is here a type of the Lord Jesus Who will also command respect through the judgments He will execute.

Verses 4-8 | Announcement of the Death of All the Firstborn

4 Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, 5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. 6 Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been [before] and such as shall never be again. 7 But against any of the sons of

Israel a dog will not [even] bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.' 8 All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

Moses addresses his last words to Pharaoh. Unlike all previous plagues that God brought across Egypt through Moses and Aaron, God Himself will execute the last plague. To this end He will go through the midst of Egypt and judge the firstborn. In these firstborn children God will smite the whole land of Egypt (Psa 78:51; 136:10).

The firstborn is a symbol of strength. The eldest son is the deepest pride of the oriental man. As is customary in the East, the existence of the name, of the family, depends on the eldest son. He represents the power of the whole generation. All hope of the natural man focuses on the firstborn. That's why God dashes all their hope by smiting their firstborn.

In the same way God breaks the power of every natural man, either by man humbling himself as he repents before God, or by bringing everlasting judgment upon him.

A loud wailing will fill the whole country of Egypt that night. It is the terrible pre-fulfillment of the cry of all who will abide forever in the outer darkness. There will be all those who on earth have preferred darkness to light. They "loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (Jn 3:19). Their desire to have nothing to do with God Who is Light (1Jn 1:5) is then fulfilled forever.

Unlike Egypt, there is no unrest among the Israelites at all. For the last time the distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites is mentioned. The Egyptians will see in this distinction a reason to ask the people to leave. To this end they will come to Moses and bow down before him.

After these last words to Pharaoh, Moses went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. This time Pharaoh does not have the chance to chase Moses away, but Moses leaves himself. He no longer has any timidity or fear of Pharaoh. He is in fellowship with God and therefore filled with a holy indignation for the sins of Pharaoh (cf. Mk 3:5a).

Verses 9-10 | The Heart of Pharaoh Hardened

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

The LORD tells Moses why Pharaoh will not listen to him, despite all the miracles he and Aaron have done for Pharaoh. God wants to give an abundance of miracles as a testimony of His power. As for Pharaoh, everything is in vain. If man refuses to listen, God can use his unwillingness to demonstrate His power as a warning testimony to anyone who wants to see.

Exodus 12

Introduction

The fact that Israel did not suffer most of the previous plagues is grace. However, in the final plague, the judgment of the firstborn, there is no distinction between Egypt and Israel. The firstborn of Israel are as much subject to judgment as those of Egypt. Before we know what salvation is, we must first know what judgment is.

The institution of the Passover comes from God. The Passover is God's starting point to

1. guide the people through the Red Sea,
2. lead them through the wilderness, and finally
3. bring them to the promised land.

Verses 1-2 | A New Beginning

1 Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

The LORD speaks as Judge. That He is both for Egypt and for His people. For His people He is also the Savior. He speaks about the Passover while the people are still in Egypt. The Passover is the only feast Israel has celebrated in Egypt.

It is the beginning of a new era. It is the beginning of God's relationship with His people on the basis of salvation. Now the people can go to serve God. This is the first month of the religious calendar of Israel, the month of Abib (Exo 13:4). Abib means 'fresh, young ears', for example from the barley. In the civil year it is the seventh month at that moment. This new calendar gives the Israelites a new identity as the beloved people of the true God.

Verses 3-5 | A Lamb

3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers'

households, a lamb for each household. 4 Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons [in them]; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

Moses must speak to “all the congregation of Israel”, an expression that is being used here for the first time. It indicates the unity of God’s people. On the tenth day, the beginning of the three-day darkness, every household must take a lamb into their house. God’s redemption of His people as a whole is known and seen in the households.

The world does not see what the church does when it meets, but it does see what happens in the households of the believers. The lamb must have the central place in the household. For three days the whole family can observe the lamb. The significance of the household is highlighted in this chapter in a special way.

The lamb must be there for three days. On the fourteenth day it must be killed. The Lord Jesus, the true Passover (1Cor 5:7b), we also can observe during the three years of His walk on earth. We see this when we read the Gospels. Then we always have to remember that He is on His way to the cross to be slaughtered there. We can think of His death especially on Sunday when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

If a household is too small, it can share a lamb with its neighbors. The lamb is the standard. We must comply with the Lamb, not the other way around. Each household enjoys the Lord Jesus to different degrees. If there is much enjoyed, one can let others share in it.

The lamb must be taken from the sheep or from the goats. The sheep is usually used as a burnt offering, the goat as a sin offering. It has to be “unblemished”, there may be no defect on it. The Lord Jesus is the true burnt offering and the true sin offering. He is “a lamb unblemished and spotless” (1Pet 1:19). He is the One “who committed no sin” (1Pet 2:22), “who knew no sin” (2Cor 5:21), and of Whom is true: “In Him there is no sin” (1Jn 3:5). All this can only be said of Him. Therefore John the baptist could point at Him and say: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29).

It must be a male lamb, a year old. This relates to the manly power with which the Lord Jesus accomplished the work on the cross. We also see in the word “a year old” an indication of tenderness, sweetness. So the Lord Jesus was as well. Will the children in a household not have observed the lamb like this?

Verses 6-11 | The Procedure

6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. 7 Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the flesh that [same] night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, [both] its head and its legs along with its entrails. 10 And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. 11 Now you shall eat it in this manner: [with] your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD’s Passover.

After the lamb has been the center of the household for three full days, it must be killed on the fourteenth day (verse 6). This means that blood must be shed. This indicates in picture that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22). It also shows that the life of the Lord Jesus does not bring salvation, but that only through His death reconciliation is possible (Rom 5:10). Although the Passover is killed in the individual houses, it is killed by all households at the same time, so it can be said that “the whole assembly of the congregation” kills it.

Then, for the first time in the Bible, there is spoken about the meaning of blood (verse 7). In Genesis we read about sacrifices, but not about blood. This blood must be put on the two doorposts and on the lintel. Not on the threshold, because that could show contempt for the blood, there it could be trampled on.

How important it is to put the whole household behind the blood. It is really more important for parents that their children shelter behind the blood of the Lamb than that they have a good position in the world. Some-

times a shift can be observed. If a household no longer feeds on the Lamb, the darkness will slowly but surely return in the household.

The lamb should not only be observed and killed, it should also be eaten (verse 8). Eating the lamb roasted on the fire means that by faith we make Christ our own. It means that we spiritually feed ourselves with the Lord Jesus as the One Who has borne our judgment (Jn 6:53-55). The unleavened loaves speak of His sinless life.

The bitter herbs remind us that it is our sins that have brought Him into the judgment, with which suffering and sorrow are connected (cf. Lam 3:15). This must be our food in the dark world in which we live.

The lamb has not been spared suffering (verse 9). We should not think that the Lord Jesus was not exposed to the full heat of judgment. God has not softened the judgment because He is His Son.

The head, the legs and the entrails of the lamb are a picture of the different aspects of the Lord Jesus in His suffering. The head speaks of the thoughts of the Lord Jesus during this judgment; the legs show the strength and perseverance with which He carried this judgment; the entrails remind us of the feelings He had during the judgment. In Psalms we read a lot about this.

Nothing of the lamb may be kept until the next day (verse 10). On the same day that it is killed, it should be eaten. The eating must always be done in connection with His death, with the judgment of sins. It shows the close connection between the sacrifice and the meal as a result of the sacrifice. When we think of our delivery, as it were, feeding ourselves with it, it must never be separated from the work that the Lord Jesus did at Calvary.

We will never be able to fully appreciate His work. There is much that we do not understand. God wants us to say that to Him, as it were offering that to Him as an offering by fire.

The Passover includes an attitude of being ready for immediate departure from Egypt (verse 11). To gird the waist, or loins, means that the long clothes are put on and attached to the waist. In this way the legs are free to be able to walk fast. To gird the waist indicates that there is no need to arrange things anymore and that one can immediately start moving at the right time.

Thus the Lord's Supper reminds us each time of the coming of the Lord (1Cor 11:26). Is our life influenced by the Lord's Supper? Are we therefore ready to leave the place over which the judgment comes? Whoever celebrates the Lord's Supper should be ready for immediate departure out of the world when the Lord comes to take us up. He has promised three times: "I am coming quickly" (Rev 22:7a,12a,20a). Is our answer: "Amen. Come Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20b)?

It is the Passover for the LORD. Salvation is not primarily about the consequences for the people, however glorious those may be, but about the One Who has brought about this salvation and how He has done that. We see the same with the Supper. It is the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:20). Every time we celebrate it, we proclaim the Lord's death. It is about Him. He has asked both of the bread, of which He says "this is My body", and of the wine, of which He says that it is the new covenant in His blood: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1Cor 11:24-25).

Verses 12-14 | The Reason for the Passover

12 For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment—I am the LORD. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy [you] when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 'Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it [as] a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it [as] a permanent ordinance.

God will personally judge Egypt. His supreme majesty over man and beast and all the gods of Egypt becomes visible. Resistance is foolish and useless. "I ... the LORD" says it, who will resist then?

There is only one way to escape judgment: the blood. Once again, full attention is drawn to the blood. It is not so much the attention of man as the attention of God: "When I see the blood." In the world and regrettably also in parts of Christianity one may disparage the blood, despise it even, but it is the only way God's judgment will pass over you.

Blood on the doorposts means: the judgment has already been here. Where the blood of Christ covers a man's sins, God's judgment passes over that man. This is also connected to the word Passover, because it means 'to pass over'.

By the way, it is good that it is not our appreciation of the blood of Christ that decides our salvation, but the appreciation God has for it. The blood of Christ is of such a rich significance to God that He has determined it as the means of the redemption of His children (Eph 1:7; Rom 5:9).

The Passover is instituted by the LORD and is held as a feast for Him. It is His joy, together with His people, to think constantly, as "a permanent ordinance", about what His Son, as the real Passover Lamb did on the cross. Forever we shall see the Lamb "standing, as if slain" (Rev 5:6a) and both praise and worship Him for His work and God Who gave Him: "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, [be] blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped" (Rev 5:13-14).

Verses 15-20 | The Feast of Unleavened Bread

15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and [another] holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. 17 You shall also observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. 18 In the first [month], on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. 19 Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether [he is] an alien or a native of the land. 20 You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

Immediately after the Passover the order is given to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. 1Cor 5:7b-8). The immediate connection between the two feasts is strongly expressed in Luke 22: “The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover” (Lk 22:1). Here we see how the two parties are identified with each other.

The meaning is clear. If we believe that Christ, our Passover, has been slain for us, then it is essential that our life will become a feast in which sin – of which the leaven is a symbol – has no place. God expects this of us when we realize that all our sins are judged in the death of Christ.

It is important to always look at our home and our lives in the light of Christ’s death. Every sin (leaven) that has crept in again will then become visible. We must confess that sin and so remove the leaven. If the leaven is not removed, but eaten, the one who eats it had to be put away from Israel, that is to say be killed. For the church, the instruction applies to someone who allows sin in his life and refuses to judge it: “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves” (1Cor 5:13b).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted seven days, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the month. The number seven symbolizes a complete, a specific period. We can see that, for example, in a week that has seven days. When seven days have passed, a new week begins. Symbolically the number seven represents our whole lives. We would like to celebrate this feast because it results from our deliverance from the bondage of sin. God’s purpose is that our life should be a feast “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, without room for “old leaven” or “the leaven of malice and wickedness” (1Cor 5:8).

To this feast, which also has to do with what has to happen in the houses, are linked two holy assemblies. There must be an assembly on the first day of the feast and an assembly on the seventh day of the feast. What happens in the houses is begun by the whole and ended by the whole. God wants His children in their families to be completely before Him and He also wants them all together before Him as a people.

Verses 21-23 | Order to Kill the Passover Lamb

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover [lamb].

22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. 23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite [you].

Moses orders to slay the Passover lamb. Its blood must be collected in a basin and applied to the doorposts and lintel with hyssop. Hyssop speaks of man's smallness, his insignificance (1Kgs 4:33a). The application of the blood to the doorposts and lintel shelters all those within that household. It is God's value of the blood which is important. Blood makes God great and man small.

The LORD goes through Egypt to smite it. Smiting the firstborn means smiting the whole land of Egypt. Until the Israelites leave, they are part of Egypt. They are also subject to judgment. The LORD will not allow the destroyer to enter a house with a door to which the blood has been applied.

Verses 24-28 | The Passover as a Remembrance

24 And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. 25 When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. 26 And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' 27 you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped. 28 Then the sons of Israel went and did [so]; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

As the Passover is celebrated in Egypt, it will never be celebrated again. However, the remembrance of that one-off event must always be kept alive in the future. That is why the members of the New Testament church meet every first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's Supper and remember Calvary.

The children will ask about the meaning of the celebration of the Passover. In the answer given by the parents, gratitude and admiration can be heard.

They can testify that the LORD passed over the houses of the Israelites, He spared their houses.

Our children see that we celebrate the Lord's Supper. They ask us about the meaning of it. How do we answer their questions? Our answers can be completely correct in a doctrinal sense. However, the meaning will not come across if our answers do not resound with admiration for God's grace, if we do not testify with deep gratitude of what the Lord Jesus wanted to do for us on the cross.

Verses 29-30 | Death of the Firstborn

29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. 30 Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.

The hour of judgment has come. It can take a long time, God is patient, but then there is no more delay. There was no house throughout Egypt where there was no dead one to mourn. It is the final blow. God's judgment is indiscriminate. It affects everyone from the highest to the lowest in society (Job 34:19-20).

Verses 31-36 | The Israelites Are Given Freedom

31 Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. 32 Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also." 33 The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, [with] their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. 35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; 36 and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Pharaoh does nothing more to hold the Israelites. On the contrary, he and his subjects want to get rid of them as quickly as possible. There is no question of any conversion. He now has more disadvantage from them than advantage. In his request for a blessing he acknowledges his superiors in Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron did not respond to this question, as they did respond to his request to pray for him. Pharaoh is a finished case.

The time of deliverance has arrived. The people are acting fast. They take the unleavened dough with them. In obedience to the word of Moses they ask of the Egyptians all kinds of things. The LORD works and it is given to them (cf. Pro 13:22b; Job 27:16-17). Obedience to the Word always brings blessing.

Verses 37-42 | The Exodus Begins

37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. 38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. 39 They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. 40 Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.

The people start from Rameses (or Raamses), the place where they experienced their slavery (Exo 1:11) and travel to the first stop: Sukkoth (Num 33:5). Sukkoth means ‘huts’ and indicates, just like a tent, that the people are pilgrims.

With the people, also “a mixed multitude” goes up. They do not belong to the people of God, but they see some advantage in joining the people of God. They are guided not by faith, but by calculation. This “rabble” will later become a source of misery (Num 11:4). Every time a work of God happens, the enemy will try to infiltrate that work. By the inattentiveness

of the local church, the enemy succeeds in introducing elements into the service that harm the true features of the church.

The first food they eat after leaving Egypt is unleavened cakes. That is a good start to the journey. They leave so hastily that the dough has not had a chance to do its job.

People who are radically converted from the world, often, without further reflection, immediately put away various things out of their lives, such as music, films and books with a sinful content. This direct action is important. The newly converted Ephesians also act in this way. Only after they have burned their wrong stuff do they calculate the value (Acts 19:19). If they had counted first, they might have regretted it and kept their magic books.

The LORD fulfills His word which He once spoke to Abraham. God's mills grind slowly, but surely. After four hundred and thirty years (1876-1446 B.C.) in Egypt, the night has arrived in which the people leave. It is a night that is to the glory of the LORD. The Passover feast should be celebrated as a reminder of that night.

The word "night" appears seven times in this chapter. It is reminiscent of the three hours of darkness in which the Lord Jesus was made sin and carried the sins of all who believe in Him. It is also "in the night when He was betrayed" (1Cor 11:23) that the Lord instituted His Supper.

Verses 43-49 | Who May Eat the Passover

43 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; 44 but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. 45 A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. 46 It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. 47 All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. 49 The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you."

The supervision of who can eat of the Passover is a responsibility of the whole people of God. No one should eat it who has not sheltered behind the blood. The Passover is significant for Israel, only for the members of God's people. Circumcision was always to be the distinguishing mark of Israel.

Circumcision represents the judgment of the flesh that Christ underwent on the cross (Col 2:11). Practically it means that everything of the old nature must be put to death, so that what is of the sinful flesh has no chance to express itself. Those who have not been circumcised may not eat of the Passover. He who allows sin to exist in his life, may not participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Passover is eaten in a house. We can apply this to the church as a whole and as a house. The church is the house of God (1Tim 3:15). The Lord's Supper is also a unity meal (1Cor 10:17). Its celebration expresses the unity of the church.

All in all, it becomes clear that only those can participate in this meal who, through repentance and faith, are part of the church of God and judge sin in their lives. The supervision of this is a responsibility of the entire local church.

In verse 46 we see additional proof that the Passover lamb refers to the Lord Jesus. The words "nor are you to break any bone of it" are quoted in John 19 in connection with Christ on the cross (Jn 19:32-33,36). In Him this precept is fulfilled.

Verses 50-51 | The Israelites Brought out of Egypt

50 Then all the sons of Israel did [so]; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And on that same day the LORD brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

In the freshness of their freedom all the Israelites do what the LORD has told them through Moses and Aaron. No discord is heard.

The Passover is celebrated by families, but Egypt is left "by their hosts". This indicates that a battleground is being entered, as their wilderness journey begins.

Exodus 13

Verses 1-2 | Command to Sanctify the Firstborn

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.”

The LORD gives Moses the command to sanctify every firstborn. Sanctify means to set apart for a particular purpose, and that is here to be for Him. Before, God sanctified a day, the sabbath day, and set it apart from the other days (cf. Gen 2:3). Now He sanctifies persons, the firstborn. Other persons who will be sanctified later are the priests and Levites and the whole people. Later He also sanctifies a place – tabernacle and temple – and utensils for service. What He sanctifies is from and for Him. By sanctifying something, He exercises His right to it.

In the New Testament we read that the believers are sanctified (Heb 10:10). Therefore they are called “saints” (1Cor 1:2a; Rom 1:7). That is the position of the believer. Sanctification is also mentioned as an ongoing process (1Thes 5:23). The believer belongs to Him and should glorify Him (1Cor 6:20). If He has bought us, He is also entitled to everything we own. What the believers are as ‘firstborn’, they are through their connection with the Lord Jesus, Who is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

Verses 3-10 | The Feast of Unleavened Bread

3 Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten. 4 On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth. 5 It shall be when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall observe this rite in this month. 6 For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. 7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven

be seen among you in all your borders. 8 You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. 10 Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year.

Before Moses continues with the sanctification of the firstborn, he speaks once again emphatically about the Feast of unleavened bread. This emphasizes how much sanctification and unleavened bread belong together. With true separation from the world and dedication to God there is no place for leaven. Being separated from the world and living for God is a feast. Sin (leaven) spoils that feast.

The people are reminded of this feast on the occasion of the redemption which the LORD has brought about. Time and again God refers to that salvation when He talks about the relationship with His people. He has delivered the people, not that they may live for themselves, but for Him Who has delivered them.

This feast, in verse 6 for the first time called “a feast to the LORD”, must be celebrated not only in the wilderness, but also in the land. When we think of the redemption from the world and the power of sin, it makes our life in the wilderness, which is this world for the believer, a feast. God participates in such a feast. He rejoices in it as His own people celebrate this feast. It also makes our stay in the land, for us the heavenly places, a feast. There we may enjoy the blessings given to us in Christ (Eph 1:3). We can only enjoy it if sin is not allowed in our lives.

The leaven may not be eaten. It should not even be present anywhere in the land. Is it not a major cause that so little is really enjoyed of the heavenly, spiritual, eternal blessings, that so much sin (leaven) has come into the lives of the people of God?

The meaning of this feast must be explained to our children (verse 8). It is the same as with the Passover, where the question comes from the children (Exo 12:26). The explanation is not a theological treatise on what happened in Egypt, but a personal testimony of the head of the family. He tells what the LORD personally did to him in his redemption.

Can we explain to our children why we live the way we do? Are we doing this in connection with the redemption that the Lord Jesus has worked for us? This feast should constantly direct what we do – “hands” – and what we look at, what our field of vision is – “between your eyes”. The best use we can make of our eyes is to read the Word of God. The result is that what we say, our confession, is in accordance with God’s will.

Verses 11-16 | Sanctification of the Firstborn

11 “Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. 13 But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem [it], then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. 14 And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ 16 So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

The sanctification of the firstborn (verse 2) means that the firstborn must be given or dedicated to the LORD. In the time in which we live, every believer is a firstborn (Heb 12:23b). If God saves from judgment, He does so for Himself. God delivers a sinner from the bondage of sin and makes him His slave. Moses speaks of devoting to the LORD as something that only happens when the people have arrived in the land of Canaan. Spiritually, this means that real dedication to the Lord according to God’s thoughts takes place in connection with knowing the blessings in Christ in the heavenly places.

A special case is the firstborn of a donkey. It must be redeemed by a lamb. If this does not happen, the neck of the foal must be broken. This peculiarity is connected to the firstborn of a human being. The firstborn son must

also be bought free by a lamb. This refers back to the redemption from Egypt, where the firstborn was also redeemed by a lamb. Whosoever did not hide behind the blood of the lamb died by the hand of the destroying angel (Exo 12:23).

The firstborn of a human being is compared here with the firstborn of a donkey. The donkey is an unclean animal. Man by nature is also unclean to God. The donkey is the picture of man under the yoke of sin (cf. Gen 16:11-12). God does exercise His right to it. In the redemption lies the salvation. A person can only belong to the church of the firstborn if he is redeemed by the Lamb (1Pet 1:18-19). The Lamb died in place of all who believe.

The comparison with a donkey is not flattering, but it is significant. Whoever does not want to bow the neck, the neck of such a person must be broken. Whoever acknowledges to be in need of salvation may appeal to the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lamb. We should make this clear to our children when they ask for it. The example of Pharaoh is added as a warning (verse 15).

To be a firstborn and redeemed by the Lamb must determine our actions and our thinking. The end of the section on the firstborn is the same as the end of the section on unleavened bread (cf. verse 16; verse 9). This confirms the close link between the two cases. It makes it clear that the status of firstborn demands the practice of an unleavened life.

Verses 17-18 | The Way to the Red Sea

17 Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." 18 Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.

God does not take the shortest way for the people after their exodus from Egypt. In that shorter way, the people will be engaged in a struggle, which would lead them to long for Egypt. And that is not the purpose. God knows the hearts of the people. Hence He brings the people on the way to the Red Sea. There He will teach them another important lesson. They will

learn that God has broken the power of the enemy completely. In Egypt they learned that God is against them, but that they are protected from His wrath by the blood of the lamb. At the Red Sea they learn that God is for them and against their enemies.

Verse 19 | Joseph's Bones

19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

The moment God speaks of the way He wants His people to go, attention is focused on Joseph's bones. Joseph's order concerning his bones has not been forgotten (Gen 50:25; Heb 11:22; Jos 24:32). Joseph was the savior of the world. He died. As the dead man he is carried away in the midst of the people. The memory of the savior thus remains alive.

The application for us is found in 2 Corinthians 4: "Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Cor 4:10) The constant remembrance of the death of the Lord Jesus will make it possible for us to resist sin in our walk – after all, He died for that purpose – and that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our bodies.

Verses 20-22 | Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire

20 Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness. 21 The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

The people are not sent into the wilderness left to their own devices. God does not lead them by the easiest route, but He assures them of His guidance. By coming under the cloud, the people are "baptized into Moses" (1Cor 10:2), which means that the people move with Moses through whom the LORD leads them. During the day the LORD goes out before them in a pillar of cloud and in the night in a pillar of fire, thereby showing His great compassion to them (Neh 9:19).

The pillar of cloud is a protection against the heat during the day. Because of the light from the pillar of fire, night is no obstacle to travel. Today God leads His people through the Holy Spirit, Whom He does not take away either. The Lord Jesus says of Him that He will “be with you forever; [that is] the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16b-17a).

Exodus 14

Verses 1-2 | The People Must Camp by the Sea

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.

The LORD's command to set up their camp by the sea seems a foolish command. That is how the people get trapped. They have the sea in front of them and Pharaoh behind them. But what for the mind seems foolishness is the right way for faith (Heb 11:29).

Verses 3-4 | Pharaoh's Reaction Foretold

3 For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, ‘They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ 4 Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

God gives the explanation for His command. He knows what Pharaoh will think. Next, He will let Pharaoh react as He wills. Pharaoh will unknowingly become an instrument through which God will glorify Himself.

Verses 5-9 | Pharaoh Starts the Chase

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” 6 So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; 7 and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the [other] chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly. 9 Then the Egyptians chased after them [with] all the horses [and] chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

Pharaoh receives the message that the people have left. He himself has given permission for it, but apparently as in an intoxication, a haze, without any real awareness of the content of his words. He has been forced to act by the circumstances, without inner conviction of God's omnipotence. He never had the intention to really let them go. When he hears the message, it is as if he wakes up. He wondered in amazement how they could allow Israel to depart "from serving us".

As the LORD has foretold, it also happens. Pharaoh goes back on his promise (cf. Jer 34:10-11). Blind as to the power of God, he starts the chase. Blinded by his own interests, Pharaoh uses his army against God's people, something he has never done before. He deploys his very best troops. On the one hand it is Pharaoh's own will, on the other hand he cannot do anything else because God has hardened his heart. The latter is the result of his own stubborn will, his unwillingness to bow before God.

The anger of Pharaoh is great, as is his speed to chase after the people. He only uses chariots, not footmen because they would go too slowly. Pharaoh overtakes them at the place where the people have set up their camp according to God's will. He seems to have succeeded in his goal. The fate of the people seems sealed. Similarly, satan does not intend to release anyone from his power without a fight. He will do his utmost to keep his victims in his power or to get them back again into it.

Verses 10-12 | The Fear of the People

10 As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. 11 Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

Pharaoh did not take account of God and someone who counts outside of God always counts wrong. It is not only Pharaoh who is the object of God's actions. With the chase by Pharaoh, God also has in mind the education of His people.

The people react in panic fear. They see no way out. That way out is not there for the eye, neither around them nor within themselves. But by faith there is a way out after all – upwards (2Cor 4:8). They call to the LORD, but not in true faith. They blame Moses. In their fear they make statements that do not testify of faith, but of unbelief.

Forgotten are all the wonders and signs which the LORD has done in Egypt. They only see the circumstances. They do not remember what the LORD has already done for them. As soon as freedom creates difficulties, they long to return to slavery. But God knows how to use their need to give them new teaching in the way of faith.

The language they use in their fear is the language of someone who has sheltered behind the blood of the Lamb, but who has no peace in his conscience regarding the power of the enemy. Someone can be a believer, but still constantly wrestle with the power of sin. As a result, such a believer becomes unhappy and miserable. This can take such strong forms that he yearns for a life in the world. There he did not experience this misery.

In Romans 7 we find the New Testament counterpart of the situation in which the people find themselves here. There we hear someone speak who is born again, but has not yet experienced the fullness of salvation. That this person has been born again is shown by the fact that he enjoys “the law of God in the inner man” (Rom 7:22). Such a thing can never be said of an unbeliever. The same person experiences that, although born again, he feels increasingly miserable because he fails so badly in doing good. Instead, he always does evil. Finally, he exclaims in despair: “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death (Rom 7:24)?

Verses 13-14 | Moses Encourages the People

13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. 14 The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

Calm and with conviction Moses gives the appropriate answer to the complaint of the people. Although he does not know how the matter will proceed, he says to them that they must trust, and that they will see the

salvation of the LORD. They don't have to do anything themselves. The LORD will fight for them. They will see the results of His work. This will free them from their fear and make them able to move on in joy.

The person from Romans 7 can, after the exclamation "wretched man that I am!", say "thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25). After many times "I" – we hear this word about forty times in Romans 7 –, he is now at the point where he no longer sees what he can do, but what God has done through Jesus Christ. That is true deliverance or freedom. Christ not only died for sins, the deeds; He also died to annul the power of sin. His blood cleanses from sins, His death delivers from the power of sin. A picture of that is what the people will learn as a lesson at the Red Sea.

Verses 15-18 | What the LORD Will Do

15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. 16 As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. 17 As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."

The LORD asks Moses why he calls to Him. That is not necessary, is it? The people don't have to be afraid of the enemy, do they? After all, he has brought them out. Will He not then guide them further? Yet in His grace He meets the cries of His people and says what to do. They must continue in faith as if there were no sea. The LORD sends Moses, as a picture of the Lord Jesus, before them. Moses must prepare the way and stretch his staff over the sea to divide the waters.

The Lord Jesus died for us. He bore the judgment for us. By this we can, hidden in Him, pass through death. We died with Him, and so death is deprived of its power over us. This is why we died to sin, so that sin no longer has control over us (Rom 6:5-12).

Sin came into the world through man's disobedience. The power of sin is broken by the obedience of one Man, Jesus Christ. In the three hours of

darkness on the cross He was made sin. At this lowest point of suffering His glorification of God is also the greatest. God is glorified in respect of sin by acting with it in this way. God hates sin. Now that sin has come, He uses sin to contribute to His glorification.

Verses 19-20 | The LORD Protects His People

19 The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. 20 So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

The Angel of God takes a different place. He always takes that place for the benefit of His people which is needed at that moment. He changes from Leader to Guard. He Who is their vanguard is also their rearguard: "And your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard" (Isa 58:8b). While God judges the enemies of His people, He protects His people with His glory. What is for His people for protection means the judgment for His enemies.

These two sides are also in the gospel: "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life" (2Cor 2:15-16a).

Verses 21-22 | The Path Through the Sea

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea [back] by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. 22 The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters [were like] a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

By the power of God there is a path through the sea (Job 26:12) and "by faith they passed through the Red Sea as though [they were passing] through dry land" (Heb 11:29a; Psalms 66:6). We see God's almighty power in nature. He splits the waters. He does so by means of "a strong east wind". The elements of nature are under His authority and obey Him in what He commands them.

In the end time, when the people in the great tribulation will undergo the same trial of faith, they will also experience the same salvation: “But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. “For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isa 43:1-3a).

Verses 23-28 | Pharaoh's Army Perishes

23 Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. 24 At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. 25 He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians." 26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

Salvation is not only a separation between the people and the enemy, but also the complete judgment of the whole army of Pharaoh. The LORD looks down upon the whole scene (verse 24). He notes everything, He is in charge. He lets Pharaoh go to the middle of the sea. Then He confuses the Egyptian army and causes the wheels of the chariots to swerve. Natural explanations can be sought, but here we see that the LORD works it out. That gives reason to remember Him and His wonders, as Asaph does (Psa 77:11,16,19-20).

At first it seems as if Pharaoh can go the same way as the people. He also goes into the Red Sea. It seems as if God is with Pharaoh and against His people. But what salvation means to Israel means judgment to Pharaoh:

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though [they were passing] through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned” (Heb 11:29). And that judgment is total, just as salvation is total. There is not one enemy left. Not one member of the people dies.

So it is with the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. There it also seems as if God is against Him and cooperates with His enemies. However, the resurrection makes it clear on which side God stands. This is only possible by understanding and exercising faith. In the judgment that the Lord Jesus bore on the cross, the victory over Satan is included. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is proof that the victory over sin, Satan, death and the world is total. In His victory the victory of His people is included.

Verses 29-31 | Israel Believes in the LORD and in Moses

29 But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters [were like] a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

The people reach dry land. The man who in Romans 7 sinks, as it were, into the marsh, gets firm ground under his feet, which he expresses in faith by agreeing with the truth: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). This is also what the believer expresses when he is baptized. In going through the Red Sea we see a picture of baptism. Just as the Israelites join Moses by going through the sea (1Cor 10:1-2), so the believer identifies with the death of Christ by baptism (Rom 6:3-4a).

Israel sees the dead bodies (cf. Isa 66:24). They see the proof of their complete deliverance from the power of the enemy. His dominion has been destroyed. They have been impressed by the power of the enemy, they have been terrified by it; now they have been impressed by the power of God. Israel recognizes the mighty deed of the LORD.

They are filled with respect for Him and for Moses, His servant. If we have understood that we are free from the power of sin, it will fill us with awe

and admiration for God and for His Son through Whom God has accomplished this. The result is that we will sing and honor Him, as we will see in the next chapter.

Exodus 15

Verse 1 | The Reason for the Song

*1 Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said,
"I will sing to the LORD,
For He is highly exalted;
The horse and its rider
He has hurled into the sea.*

For the first time in the Bible we hear of a song. This is sung by a people who have been redeemed from Egypt and have safely reached the other side of the Red Sea, while the power of the enemy has been broken. This song will also be sung in the end time. Then it sounds from the mouth of the victors over the beast: "And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! (Rev 15:2-3). This is the last time that the Bible talks about a song.

In the life of the believer, the first reason to sing to the glory of God and the Lord Jesus is the awareness that he is a child of God who is redeemed from his sins and delivered from the power of sin. He will sing this song forever as the song of the Lamb. By the Lamb the Israelites are redeemed from the enemy; by the Lamb of God all believers are redeemed at all times from their sins.

Verses 2-3 | Who the LORD Is

*2 "The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will extol Him.
3 "The LORD is a warrior;
The LORD is His name.*

The people sing not of themselves, but of the LORD. He did it, He completed the work that led to salvation. Here it is the personal expression of gratitude for the salvation obtained. Yet it is about Him. The emphasis is on Who the LORD is.

There is also the desire to make a dwelling for Him. The redeemed one does not live alone with God, but with all the redeemed; the whole people may live with Him (verse 13). Not only the living, but also the fathers who have already fallen asleep, will share in the results of God's delivering action. Living with God is the wish of every soul that fears God (Psa 27:4).

The Name of God is expressed in His deeds. The first thing that a redeemed person learns to know from God are the deeds He has done for his redemption. That is why the redeemed sings the praises of those deeds.

Verses 4-12 | The LORD Deals with the Enemies

4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his army

He has cast into the sea;

And the choicest of his officers

Are drowned in the Red Sea.

5 "The deeps cover them;

They went down into the depths like a stone.

6 "Your right hand, O LORD,

Is majestic in power,

Your right hand, O LORD,

Shatters the enemy.

7 "And in the greatness of Your excellence You over-

throw those who rise up against You;

You send forth Your burning anger,

[And] it consumes them as chaff.

8 "At the blast of Your nostrils

The waters were piled up,

The flowing waters stood up like a heap;

The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

9 "The enemy said,

'I will pursue, I will overtake,

*I will divide the spoil;
 My desire shall be gratified against them;
 I will draw out my sword,
 My hand will destroy them.'*
 10 *"You blew with Your wind,
 The sea covered them;
 They sank like lead in the mighty waters.*
 11 *"Who is like You
 Among the gods, O LORD?
 Who is like You,
 Majestic in holiness,
 Awesome in praises,
 Working wonders?*
 12 *"You stretched out Your right hand,
 The earth swallowed them.*

In his song, the redeemed describes precisely how the LORD has dealt with the enemies. He sings of how the LORD has cast the enemies into the sea, drowned them, and thereby completely destroyed them. He glorifies the right hand (verses 6,12) of the LORD. The right hand symbolizes power. He is impressed by the great excellence and the burning anger of the LORD. The enemy is as worthless to the LORD as chaff which is consumed by the fire.

The blast of the LORD has made the waters a dam, so that His people could go to the other side dry footed. That same breath has blown again at the moment the enemy in haughtiness has gone the same way and the waters have covered him. Exterminating the enemy costs God nothing more than breathing out, so to speak (cf. 2Thes 2:8).

Today the believer may express something like that in his praise. Scripture speaks of the power of the enemy, but which has been destroyed by the overwhelming power of the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:14). The victory that He gained over the enemy by His death on the cross, gives eternal cause to sing of Him. Every redeemed person will long to learn more and more by studying the Scriptures – Who He is, Who has redeemed him, and what He has done to achieve it. Every new aspect he discovers is a reason to praise Him.

The exclamation “Who is like You?” is understandable (verse 11). Egypt has many gods. Behind these idols are demons. What have they been able to do against Him? They have been nowhere to be seen. God has glorified Himself in power and He has glorified Himself in holiness. With His power He has wiped out His enemies, and in His holiness He has paved the way to have a people who can dwell with Him, and with which He can dwell.

Verse 13 | The Direct Consequence for His People

*13 “In Your lovingkindness You have led
The people whom You have redeemed;
In Your strength You have guided [them]
to Your holy habitation.*

God has redeemed the people by His lovingkindness, and guided them by His strength. The verse stands in the past present tense, as if God had both redeemed the people and brought them to His holy habitation. In this verse we listen to the language of faith of a redeemed people (cf. Rom 8:30). As a direct consequence of salvation, the people have a great perspective for the future. In faith they see themselves already arriving at the place God has devised for them.

God does not deliver His people to leave them to their own devices. He delivers His people, and then brings them to His dwelling place, the tabernacle in the wilderness. That is what the second part of this book is about. The redemption and deliverance of the sinner are not an end in themselves. They are the necessary means to become the dwelling place of God. The church is now the dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22; 1Tim 3:15).

Verses 14-16 | The Impact on Other Peoples

*14 “The peoples have heard, they tremble;
Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 “Then the chiefs of Edom
Were dismayed;
The leaders of Moab,
Trembling grips them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.*

16 *"Terror and dread
Fall upon them;
By the greatness of Your arm
They are motionless as stone;
Until Your people pass over, O LORD,
Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.*

It is as if Moses in this song has now in the spirit moved to the moment that God's dwelling place in the midst of the people is erected. The enemies see that God has achieved His goal with His people. Even today, all the actions of God for the benefit of His people make a great impression on their bitter enemies.

In our lives as believers the enemy will be rendered impotent if we in faith show that we live for God. If God is our dwelling, and if we are a dwelling for Him as a church, it will disarm the enemy.

Verse 17 | The Purpose of God's Actions

17 *"You will bring them and plant them
In the mountain of Your inheritance,
The place, O LORD,
Which You have made for Your dwelling,
The sanctuary, O Lord,
Which Your hands have established.*

In verse 13 Moses speaks of God's dwelling in the wilderness. Now it is about God's dwelling in the promised land. There is mentioned "the mountain of Your inheritance". The inheritance is always connected to the land. It is also "Your inheritance", the inheritance of God. God will take possession of His inheritance by letting His people take possession of it. Once there, He will establish there a permanent "dwelling", a "sanctuary", the temple. The redeemed also see this place ahead in faith, for he speaks of it as a finished thing: "Which Your hands have established."

The people of God, the church, may dwell with Him. The temple is also a picture of the Father's house (Jn 14:2). The church will be there forever. Until then, the temple, like the tabernacle, represents the church as the dwelling place of God on earth.

The temple belongs to a people in the land and is a permanent dwelling. The tabernacle belongs to a people in the wilderness and is a mobile dwelling. Both aspects are present in the church. The church is a heavenly thing. This is how she is presented in the letter to the Ephesians. At the same time, she is still on earth, travelling through the wilderness of this world. In that way, for example, she is presented in the first letter to the Corinthians.

Verse 18 | The LORD Reigns Forever

| 18 *"The LORD shall reign forever and ever."*

The whole plan of God for His people, whether it concerns His earthly people Israel or His heavenly people the church, will be perfectly executed by Him. To this end, He lets everything work together, and to this end He directs everything.

This is also a great encouragement for the believer's personal life. Nothing is outside God's hand. He has His purpose in everything, and He also accomplishes it. No enemy can hinder Him in this. On the contrary, He knows how to use the enemy to fulfill His plans!

Verses 19-21 | The Song of Miriam

| 19 *For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea. 20 Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. 21 Miriam answered them,*

*"Sing to the LORD,
For He is highly exalted;
The horse and his rider
He has hurled into the sea."*

After the song the gaze is once again turned to what the LORD has done with Pharaoh and his army and how the Israelites have gone through the midst of the sea on dry land.

Then we hear Miriam. The prophet Micah refers not only to Moses and Aaron but also to her as someone who the LORD has sent out before His people (Mic 6:4). We do not read that Miriam has taken charge in any ac-

tion. Moses and Aaron are the captains appointed by the LORD, the leaders. In Miriam we see the spirit of prophecy. She leads the people in a song that is an answer to the song of Moses and the Israelites.

Moses says, I will sing to the LORD. With all the women in her retinue Miriam calls for singing to the LORD. She uses the same words as Moses (verse 1), repeating what he sang. With this she says, as it were, “Amen” to the song of Moses.

Thus we can agree with a brother who, in his thanksgiving, magnifies the Lord by saying “Amen” to his thanksgiving. Then indeed the thanksgiving must have found a connection in the feelings of our heart.

Verses 22-26 | Marah

22 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. 24 So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” 25 Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw [it] into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. 26 And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.”

The song is sung. The journey begins. Three days into the wilderness and then a feast for the LORD, that is God’s purpose (Exo 7:16; 8:27-28). But that’s not how it goes. It does not become a feast, it becomes a trial. That is exactly why God lets His people go through the wilderness: they get to know themselves there, what is in their hearts, and they get to know God there (Deu 8:2). Even today, after conversion, the believer only gets to know himself well through the situations of everyday life.

Perhaps we could ask ourselves how it is possible for Israel to grumble so soon after that great salvation. If so, we probably do not know ourselves. Did it never happen to us that at a certain moment we were very

impressed by God's goodness, while at the next moment we thought God has forsaken us?

The first experience the people undergo in the wilderness is that there is no water. When they reach a place where there is water, the water turns out to be bitter. Marah means 'bitterness' (cf. Rth 1:20). The water is not drinkable. The wilderness is the land of death. The lesson to be learned is that the world has nothing that can refresh the believer. The sources of the world are bitter. They always disappoint after we have been pleased. God wants us to know His power not only in salvation, but in all circumstances of life.

This setback brings to light what is in the heart of the people. They start grumbling. Grumbling is a great evil. In Paul's exhortations in 1 Corinthians 10 it is the last in a list of five serious deviations by Israel on the journey through the wilderness: "Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1Cor 10:10).

In the book of Numbers God will punish this evil of grumbling. That is because the people then stand on the basis of the law. Here God does not punish, but acts in grace. He does not take away the trial, but wants, in picture, to introduce Christ into the trial. We see that in His instruction to take a tree. In this tree we may see:

1. Christ Himself (cf. Lk 23:31);
2. Christ's work on the tree, i.e. the cross (Gal 3:13; 1Pet 2:24a).

The Person of Christ and His accomplished work on the cross of Calvary is the remedy against every ailment, against every plague. Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the remedy for the bad situation in which the Corinthians find themselves and also for the error to which the Galatians have surrendered. In both letters the believers are called to turn to Him again; they must be brought back into a living relationship with Him.

Where Christ is introduced into the trial, the trial becomes a blessing. The water becomes fresh. To this event God connects a statute: He commits Himself to help the people. He gives the people the right to remind Him of this. He has tried the people and shown how His heart goes out to them in goodness in that trial.

But God's blessing can never come without obedience on the part of the people. God expects them to give heed to His voice and keep His commandments. In this way they will be free from all the diseases that He has put on the Egyptians. The LORD links His name as Healer to their obedience.

Verse 27 | Elim

27 Then they came to Elim where there [were] twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

After the experience they gained in Marah, the people come to the peace and rest of the oasis Elim. There is no Elim without Marah. In Elim – that means ‘trees’; oak or palm trees can be meant by this – Israel drinks plenty of the water of life. Here the flock of God is led to “quiet waters” and made lie down “in green pastures” (Psa 23:2). Elim – this oasis in the wilderness – is as it were a foretaste of the promised land, the heavenly peace, and forms a great contrast with Marah. Here are only found blessing:

1. twelve springs of water to drink from, for each tribe a spring;
2. the shadow, the protection of seventy palm trees against the heat;
3. a safe camp by the water.

The numbers twelve and seventy we find in connection both with Israel and with the church. Just as there are twelve ancestors for Israel, there are also twelve apostles for the church. The latter have laid the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20).

There are seventy elders who occupy a prominent place in Israel (Exo 24:1). Compare the later Sanhedrin, which consists of seventy members plus the high priest. In the New Testament we find not only twelve apostles who are sent out by the Lord Jesus, but later also the sending out of the seventy (Lk 10:1).

We still stand on the foundation laid by the apostles. We still linger on the springs they left us in the inspired Word of God. We also still rest in the shade, the safe protection of the “seventy palm trees” which we can see as a picture of the many gifts that the glorified Lord gives the church out of His fullness (Eph 4:7-8,11).

Exodus 16

Verses 1-3 | The People Grumble for the Second Time

1 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

The people cannot remain at Elim, however pleasant it may be. They have to travel, into the wilderness. After the redemption, the song, the trial at Marah and the rest of Elim, the real wilderness life now begins.

It is one and a half months after their departure from Egypt. It is possible that the entire stock of food they have brought with them from Egypt will then be exhausted. There is no more food, and the people express their dissatisfaction about it to Moses and Aaron.

The accusations are harsh. They blame Moses and Aaron. They present it as if they have deliberately brought the people into the wilderness to kill them there with hunger. They seem to have forgotten the slavery under which they sighed in Egypt. They only think back to "the pots of meat" and they think they "ate bread to the full" there.

So foolish are the people of God – so foolish am I – when they forget salvation, when they no longer think about the experiences they have had at Marah and Elim. In the face of adversity in faith, we often forget what God has done for our benefit and long for the past pleasures and enjoyment of the world.

Verses 4-5 | The LORD Promises Bread

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I

may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily."

As at Marah, God does not punish the people for their grumbling. In His grace He meets them. He promises that He will make bread rain from heaven. The people have to do something to eat it: they have to gather it every day. On the sixth day they have to gather twice as much for the sabbath. God gives the manna and the instructions to see if they will obey Him. He wants to see what is in their hearts.

"Bread from heaven" is a beautiful expression to indicate Who the Lord Jesus is (Jn 6:33,51). He is the true bread from heaven. In order to live in fellowship with God, it is important to gather the manna every day, that is to spiritually feed ourselves every day with the Lord Jesus. The manna is 'wilderness food'. The manna represents the Lord Jesus as He is described in the Gospels. There we see Him as Man on earth in the circumstances of daily life. If we do that, it will give us strength for our journey through the wilderness, that is, for our daily activities.

Heaven provides for things that are necessary on earth and that cannot be obtained through man's work. That lesson is hidden in the precept that on the sabbath they were not allowed to gather manna.

Verses 6-12 | The Glory of the LORD

6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 Moses said, "[This will happen] when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" 10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

12 "I have heard the grumbings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

God's action is aimed at reminding His people that He, the LORD, led them out of Egypt. They had forgotten that. We must always think about this when there are trials on our way (Rom 8:32).

The LORD wants to stop the grumbling of the Israelites by showing them His glory. Moses and Aaron are His servants. Grumbling against them is in fact grumbling against the LORD. Therefore He Himself appears in a cloud to the people. This is His first appearance to them. He does not appear to them to consume them, but to impress them with Who He is.

The LORD repeats His promise that He will give food. He promises not only manna, but also meat. Only once, on the evening of that day, they will eat meat. Afterwards, they will get the manna every morning.

Verses 13-15 | Quails and Manna

13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons of Israel saw [it], they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

As God promised, so it happens. "He rained meat upon them like the dust, even winged fowl like the sand of the seas" (Psa 78:27). God gives quails on two occasions to His people as meat to eat: here and in Numbers 11. They are birds that let themselves be carried away by the wind (Num 11:31) and are easy to catch. They are mentioned in connection with the manna (Psa 105:40).

The people first get the quails in the evening and then the manna the next morning. In the quails we can see the picture that we feed ourselves with the death of Another. The Lord Jesus speaks in John 6 in connection with the manna that we should not only eat His flesh, but also drink His blood (Jn 6:51-56). It means that we are to contemplate frequently all that His death has accomplished.

The manna represents Christ in His humiliation on earth, in His life on earth. We can only occupy ourselves with His life if we have first fed ourselves with His death, first have identified ourselves with Him as the One Who died for us.

Some features of the manna as a picture of the Lord Jesus:

1. The origin is heaven: "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33);
2. the Giver is God: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16);
3. What it looks like:
 - a. white (verse 31) = pure, without sin: He "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH" (1Pet 2:22; 2Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26);
 - b. small = small, humble: "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no [stately] form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Isa 53:2; Phil 2:5-8);
 - c. round = without beginning and end, eternal existence and perfect: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1).
4. its use:
 - a. sweet (verse 31) = pleasant taste: "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psa 34:8a; Psa 119:103; 1Pet 2:2-3);
 - b. a free gift: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23; Jn 3:16; 2Cor 9:15);
 - c. accessible to everyone, most easily for children, because it lies on the ground: "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17; Rom 10:6-10; Jn 3:16).

Verses 16-21 | Gathering of the Manna

16 This is what the LORD has commanded, 'Gather of it every man as much as he should eat; you shall take an omer apiece according to the number of persons each of you has in his tent.'" 17 The sons of Israel did so, and [some] gathered much and [some] little. 18 When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat. 19 Moses said to them, "Let no man leave any of it until morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. 21 They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt.

The manna is given by the LORD, but everyone must gather it. It is not put into anyone's mouth. Everyone may gather as much of the manna as he wants. It depends on the appetite. Each portion gathered serves for one day. None of it can be saved until the next day. This means that there must be trust that the LORD will give it the next day. It is safer in God's pantry than in the Israelite's tent. It must also be gathered before the sun gets hot. That means that it must be gathered in the morning.

The spiritual application is this: Every believer feeds on the Lord Jesus by reading the Word to the extent that he is hungry. It is necessary to be busy with God's Word every day. Preferably do it early in the morning, before all the hustle and bustle of the day comes and there is no more opportunity. The great example is the Lord Jesus Himself (Isa 50:4).

You can't live on what you read yesterday. If you do, you will be living on old food. Then there is a great danger that only old experiences will be spoken of repeatedly, which is also boring for the listener. It is no longer fresh. It becomes knowledge that puffs one up. Pride is nourished, it belongs to man and that stinks.

Paul applies verse 18 to the everyday life of the church: "But by way of equality— at this present time your abundance [being a supply] for their need, so that their abundance also may become [a supply] for your need, that there may be equality; as it is written, "He who [gathered] much did not have too much, and he who [gathered] little had no lack" (2Cor 8:13b-15). Here he learns a lesson from gathering the manna and says a few things about how we as Christians can materially care for each other.

Verses 22-31 | The Manna and the Sabbath

22 Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. 25 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, [the] sabbath, there will be none." 27 It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? 29 See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. 31 The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey.

On the sixth day the people must gather manna for two days. The next day it is the sabbath. The people may then share in the rest of God (Gen 2:2-3). Peace is not an obligation, but a privilege. Only at Sinai, when the law is given, does it become an obligation.

In the Gospels, peace is connected with the acceptance of the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:28). He is the Lord of the sabbath. Whoever has Him, has true peace and can truly enjoy Him.

On other days, the people must go out to gather the food. It is not allowed on the sabbath. This suggests two aspects in our engagement with the Lord Jesus. The first is that the knowledge about Him does not just happen. We will have to be busy with God's Word, we will have to make an effort for it. The second is that this will only happen well if we realize that everything must come from the Lord. Only when we have found our rest in Him, when He is everything to us, when we are not engaged in our own strength, we will be able to enjoy Who He is.

Verses 32-34 | Manna kept in a jar

32 Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded, 'Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread that I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" 33 Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations." 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony, to be kept.

An omerful of manna must be kept as a sample in a jar. This jar must be put before the LORD. Spiritually applied, it means that God looks back in all eternity to what the Lord Jesus was to Him on earth. That is also the case with us. Enjoying Him is not just for here and now. What cannot be preserved for a day in the wilderness, is preserved until eternity.

The jar must be placed "before the Testimony" – which later becomes the ark – where God's throne is. As long as God travels with His people on earth, He thinks of the perfect life of His Son on earth. Again later the jar is placed in the ark: "The ark of the covenant covered ..., in which was a golden jar holding the manna" (Heb 9:4). The ark is found in heaven: "And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple" (Rev 11:19a).

In heaven, the manna as a reward will be the special food for victors. The Lord Jesus Himself will give them "of the hidden manna" (Rev 2:17). In a special way, the victors will enjoy in heaven fellowship with the glorified Lord as the One Who once was in humiliation on earth. The thoughts go back to the time of pilgrimage on earth and to the power that He gave to maintain and overcome all the pressure.

Verse 35 | Forty Years Manna

35 The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

Forty is the number of trial. For so many years the journey of the people through the wilderness has lasted. During that whole time of trial there is the manna: a continuing proof of God's care. Do we see it every day? Or are we getting used to it and can we no longer see the miracle of it, as was the case with Israel?

Verse 36 | An Omer

| 36 (*Now an omer is a tenth of an ephah.*)

For everyone there is an appropriate measure to suit personal needs and responsibilities, of which speaks the number ten. Also the idea is that each person is personally part of a greater whole: it is “a tenth” part of a greater unity, “an ephah”. We should remember that we are not on this journey alone.

Exodus 17

Verses 1-3 | No Water: A Grumbling People

1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

The people move on. They do not do this because it makes sense or because they see the point of it, but because the LORD has given the command to do so. That's how they arrive at Rephidim. There appears to be no water. Is that the result of listening to a command from the Lord? It teaches us that even if we go the way of obedience, we are not spared difficulties and trials. God uses these difficulties to try and purify our faith and to glorify Himself by delivering us from them.

How slow we are to learn, just like the people who are grumbling again. The Lord brings us into such situations, so that we may learn to see what is in our hearts. Moses is blamed once again. But their behavior again indicates a poor state of mind.

Moses said that they tested the LORD. Their unbelief appears when they accuse Moses of taking them out of Egypt to let them die in the wilderness. Again they do not think of God and the redemption from slavery (Exo 16:3).

Verses 4-6 | The LORD Gives Water

4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water

will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Moses takes his need to the LORD. The LORD gives His instructions to meet in grace the grumbling of the people (cf. Exo 15:25). Here the Lord Himself gives the example of what He tells us to do: “But if your enemy ... is thirsty, give him a drink” (Rom 12:20). Moses must strike the rock on which the LORD stands with the same staff as the one with which he smote the river Nile. Then there will be water flowing. As the elders stand there as witnesses, Moses strikes the rock, causing a stream of water to flow out (Psa 78:15-16; 114:8).

Paul explains the spiritual meaning of this event. In view of this event, he says that the Israelites “all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1Cor 10:4). Here it says that the rock represents Christ. He was beaten in the judgment God has brought over Him on the cross. After His death, resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit is compared to “rivers of living water” (Jn 7:38-39).

Just as the manna comes every day, the river of water also continues to follow the people, through the whole wilderness journey (1Cor 10:4). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is a one-off happening, but its consequences continue. This is done through the intercession of the Lord Jesus: “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; [that is] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, [but] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you” (Jn 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit will be with and in the believer as long as the church is on earth, and forever.

Verse 7 | The LORD Tested

7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

In verse 2 Moses really exposes the evil mind of the people by telling them that they test the LORD. After striking the rock he calls the place “Massah

and Meribah". In this way he records the reminder of what is happening here for posterity. The reason for the naming is described in detail in this verse. Massah means 'trial', Meribah means 'struggle' (cf. Heb 3:8).

Remarkably, the names do not remind of God's gracious actions, the striking of the rock, but of the rebellious actions of the people. They need to be reminded why the rock was struck.

The special thing about this trial is not so much that God is testing His people, but the opposite, that Israel is testing God! They challenge Him by demanding from Him a proof of His presence. By doing so they show doubt of His love and faithfulness and of His presence in their midst, perhaps even of His existence. It is the same language of rebellious unbelief that does not sound unfamiliar to us in our day: If there is a God, He should do this or that. As if God has not proven Himself many times already.

The sin of the people is not just unbelief in the power of God, but a doubt of His presence and purposes. You may doubt whether He is able to work in a particular case. That is thinking too little of God, or badly of Him. It is even worse when we think He doesn't have good purposes for us, or that He doesn't care about us at all or that He isn't with us.

Verses 8-13 | Joshua's Fight Against Amalek

8 Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

In the previous sections God has made sure that the people will have food and water all the time. Now there is fighting as well. The report on the fight begins with the word 'then'. Following on from the previous verse, this fight seems to follow, not so much on the actions of God, but on the

attitude of unbelief of the people. Yet the people can make use of the food and water provided by God in order to be able to cope with this battle in the strength of it.

In Egypt they had no fighting. There they have been in slavery. At the Red Sea there was no fight either. There God has fought. In the wilderness there is a fight that has to be fought by the people. The fight against Amalek is not sought by the people. Amalek, the aggressor, is a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12), the “godless” (Heb 12:16), and shows his character traits.

Amalek is a picture of satan attacking the believer through the weakness of his sinful flesh. Peter exhorts the believers to “abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” (1Pet 2:11). This fight is against our souls. It is a fight that we must leave to the Spirit Who dwells in us (Gal 5:17). By walking in the Spirit we will not give in to the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

The Spirit directs our attention to Christ in glory. Joshua will bring the people through the Jordan into the promised land. He is a picture of Christ Who enables us through the Spirit to take possession of the land. It is the Lord Jesus Who fights against the flesh through the Spirit. ‘Joshua’ is the Hebrew name for the Greek name ‘Jesus’.

At the same time, the result of the fight depends on the place Moses occupies before God on the mountain. Moses is there together with Aaron and Hur. These three men on the mountain also represent Christ: Moses delivered the people, he represents the Redeemer; Aaron represents the Lord Jesus as the High Priest who can “sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb 4:15); Hur means whiteness, purity, which shows the perfection of Him Who does intercession.

Of course, the Lord Jesus never gets tired (Heb 7:25). It shows how much everything depends on Him, Whose intercession in heaven determines the course of the conflict on earth.

The fight is settled by Joshua with the sharpness of the sword. The Word of God is compared to “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17b). The Spirit in us applies the Word of God and enables us to resist the flesh and its desires.

Verses 14-16 | The LORD Has War Against Amalek

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." 15 Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; 16 and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Amalek has been defeated, but not destroyed. The flesh cannot be eradicated. The victory does not benefit Israel, except that they can now go further without suffering any damage. They will have to remain wary of this enemy. That is why this battle is written down so that they have a permanent warning. Anything written can always be consulted (cf. Isa 30:8). At the same time an encouragement is given: the LORD will eventually completely destroy this enemy.

The reaction of Moses is wonderful. He builds an altar. An altar indicates worship. The name he gives it speaks of victory in the Name of the LORD. The government is in the hand of the LORD. It is His fight.

The reaction of Moses is an example for us. How do we react to what the Lord does for us? The awareness that there is no power in us, but that He is in charge of our lives, will lead us to worship Him.

Exodus 18

Verses 1-12 | Jethro Visits Moses

1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 4 The other was named Eliezer, for [he said], "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." 5 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God. 6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her." 7 Then Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, and [how] the LORD had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 So Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, [and] who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

Jethro heard what God had done for Moses and His people. This was the reason he went to Moses with his daughter, the wife of Moses, and their two sons. The meeting at the mountain of God was very warm. They ask each other how things are going. That is often the first question we ask, yet we may not even wait for an answer, or quickly answer that things are going 'well'. When the question is answered with a longer, more substantial reply, we sometimes feel overwhelmed by it. It is important to show a

genuine interest in each other and to take time to do so. This requires trust that behind the question of how things are going there is real interest and not just formality.

After exchanging their mutual personal circumstances, they go 'into the house'. There Moses testifies of all the dealings of the LORD for the benefit of His people. Jethro rejoices at this and praises the LORD. He acknowledges that the God of Israel is exalted above all gods. He offers a sacrifice and eats with the Israelites before God. It is wonderful to see that the subject of the conversation is the LORD's goodness to Israel and that its effect is that He is honored. These are truly edifying conversations.

That is how our conversations should be, with (also) that effect. Surely, we can also tell about the goodness of the Lord that we have experienced in our redemption and all His care for us afterwards, can't we? This fellowship experienced will lead to expressions of joy and gratitude in which others also participate, and above all, God is honored. He is present and rejoicing.

With this meeting the first part of this book ends. Many expositors see in this scene a prophetic reference to the joy of Christ (Moses) which He shares with the nations (Jethro) and the people of Israel (Aaron with all the elders of Israel) at the beginning of the realm of peace.

The prophetic application we also see in the absence of the wife of Moses during the liberation of Israel. In the same way, the church will not be on earth in the time of the great tribulation that will come upon Israel. And just as the church will share in the joy of the deliverance of Israel, so Zipporah now appears again on stage.

Both sons are mentioned and also the meaning of their names. Gershom means 'sojourner'. He reminds us by his name that Christ, like Moses, was a Sojourner on earth, just as the church is now. But in this difficult position Moses has been sure of the help of God, which is indicated in the name Eliezer – that is, 'God is my help'.

Besides the prophetic application there is also a practical application to make. If the Lord Jesus has shown His salvation in our lives, it will be noticed by others. How wonderful it is then when we can tell those others about this, so that they too would become worshipers of Him.

Verses 13-27 | Jethro Suggests Delegation of Tasks

13 It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit [as judge] and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws." 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, 20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. 21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place [these] over them [as] leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 22 Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear [the burden] with you. 23 If you do this thing and God [so] commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace." 24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 26 They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. 27 Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

While Moses has his family visiting him, he continues his work. The people who need him stand before him. He is accessible to everyone. He is the servant of them all. But it is a long queue. On the second day of his visit Jethro sees Moses at work. The scope of the work leads Jethro to give Moses a suggestion to lighten his heavy load. He proposes that Moses should delegate tasks, while Moses himself is available for the difficult things and also represents the people before God.

This proposal is accepted by Moses. He appoints men of ability as heads over the people. These men are always available when a problem arises about which justice needs to be administered. He himself continues to handle the difficult cases.

The prophetic application is that the Lord Jesus in the reign of the realm of peace, involves others in His reign. According to their degree of faithfulness, the believers are given authority over a number of cities (Lk 19:16-19).

The question has been asked whether Moses had to accept Jethro's proposal. According to Jethro, the task is too heavy for Moses. According to his judgment, Moses, if he continues like this, will become exhausted. Has God Himself not been able to make this clear to Moses? Jethro is not of the people. Nor does he go with the people (verse 27).

Although Jethro says in verse 23 that Moses should only respond to his proposal if "God [so] commands you", the following verse speaks only of Moses doing according to what his father-in-law has recommended. We do not read about a commandment from God to act like this.

But it is also possible that God has used Jethro to introduce an order in the government of Israel. In connection with the prophetic application that has been made above, this is also a possibility. Jethro also says what kind of men should assist Moses. They must

1. be able, men with sound and determined judgment.
2. be God-fearing, men who act out of respect for God, to whom they are ultimately accountable in their jurisdiction.
3. be reliable, men who speak the truth.
4. hate dishonest gain, men who are not bribable.

The description of these qualities shows that Jethro has insight into who can assist Moses. He recommends that Moses discuss it with God and only do it if God commands him to do so. We can assume that Moses did the same. The fact that no mention is made of a commandment from God does not necessarily mean that God has not given His permission. Moses is a man who lives in communion with God.

We can apply the qualities required by Jethro to the ministry of the shepherds in the church (cf. 1Pet 5:2-3). In a broader application we see that God

Himself has given different tasks or gifts in the church. He “has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired” (1Cor 12:18). He did so in a way that “the members may have the same care for one another” (1Cor 12:25). It is important to point this out to each other, so that everything is not done by just a few.

Exodus 19

Verses 1-2 | In the Wilderness of Sinai

1 In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain.

Here a new section in Exodus begins. After the wilderness of Shur (Exo 15:22) and the wilderness of Sin (Exo 16:1), they come “into the wilderness of Sinai”. There the people set up their camp “in front of the mountain” to meet the LORD. This will be a meeting with consequences reaching into the distant future. Every meeting we have with the Lord has consequences for the future, either in blessing or in judgment, depending on our attitude.

At the place where they have now arrived, all events described from Exodus 19:1 to Numbers 10:10 take place. Here the people receive the law with its numerous directions for service to the LORD. Their stay here is slightly less than a year. They arrive “in the third month” of the first year of their exodus. They depart “in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month” (Num 10:11-12).

Verses 3-6 | The LORD Wants Israel as His Own People

3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

God calls His people both by the name of Jacob and by the name of Israel. He sees them in their weakness (Jacob), but also in what He has made of them (Israel). He has a message for this people. Moses must tell the people

something they already know. They have seen it themselves. Yet they must be reminded of what the LORD has done to the Egyptians, and what He has done for His people.

This should impress them with their own powerlessness against the power of the enemy and with the power of the LORD Who has defeated the enemy. It did not stop there. He did not leave them to their fate after their deliverance. If He had done that, they would have perished hopelessly in the wilderness. He has taken care of them (Acts 13:18). “Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. The LORD alone guided him, and there was no foreign god with him” (Deu 32:11-12). Just as the eagle makes sure his young do not fall down and die, so the LORD has made sure that His people have not perished. And where did He bring them? To Himself, in His presence, here by the mountain. What care!

In this close connection and covenant with Him, they will be able to remain if they listen to Him. All blessings which the LORD connects to His covenant are made dependent on obedience (Jer 7:23; 11:4,7). He can’t connect Himself to the own will of man, of His people. Only if His people do what He says, they will be able to enjoy His covenant.

All the earth belongs to Him (Psa 24:1), but if they obey, they will be His property in a very special way. They will be the only people on earth that are allowed to approach Him as priests in His dwelling place and to represent Him as a kingdom on earth. This great privilege is the true portion of every member of the church of God (1Pet 2:5,9; Rev 1:6).

Verses 7-8 | The Answer of the People

7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

When Moses comes back, he sets the words of God before the people. He thus places them on their conscience. Without hesitation the people agree with the conditions (verse 8). They promise to do what the LORD has said. They will repeat this promise two more times (Exo 24:3,7). We may be

tempted to welcome their response. Their answer, however, bears witness to an overestimation of their own abilities. It shows that in recent months they have not yet got to know their own rebellious heart. The LORD knows that.

Therefore, from now on the tone of the book changes. What should have become the celebration of a feast of the meeting with God (Exo 5:1), becomes an event to which thunder and lightning, anxiety and fear are connected. There is a distance between God and the people. There is a reluctance to approach God. The people have said that they will do all that the LORD has commanded; therefore He will make His commandments known to them.

Verses 9-20 | The LORD Descends upon the Mountain

9 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. 10 The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. 15 He said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." 16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who [were] in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai [was] all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. 20 The LORD came down

on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

The LORD tells Moses that He will come to him in a way that the people can see. In order to be present, the people must meet strict conditions. They must be holy, there must be nothing that does not befit the holiness of God. On the third day they shall see the LORD descending upon the mountain.

A respectful distance must be observed around the mountain. Anyone, beast or man, who touches the mountain while God appears on it, must be killed. The absolute holiness of God does not allow a living being, who is a sinner or connected to sin, to come into His presence. Only when a signal is given that is determined by Him, the mountain can be approached.

The people act in accordance with God's precepts. Moses consecrates the people and they make their clothes suitable for the presence of God. Three days they have to live like this, looking forward to that appearance. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife is not allowed either during that time. Everything must be focused on the appearance of the LORD.

This does contain a lesson for us. Do we consecrate our lives with a view to our meeting with Him when He comes (1Jn 3:2-3)? His coming is not the only thing. If we may address God as Father, the command is to be holy, as He is holy (1Pet 1:15-17). Is it our desire to live a holy life because of our daily relationship with Him? Can we also omit the things that are lawful in themselves for a certain period of time in order to concentrate fully on Him and the search for His will during that particular period of time (cf. 1Cor 7:5)?

There is a big difference in the motive of action between a member of God's people then and a member of God's people now. Israel is acting out of fear of retaliation. We may act out of love for the Father.

When the LORD appears to them, this happens with the occurrence of phenomena that cause fear and tremors. To this revelation of God, the people are brought by Moses. In Hebrews 12, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews contrasts approaching God with fear and trembling, approaching on the basis of the law, with approaching God through the work of the Lord Jesus, which is now the believer's position, approaching on the basis of grace. The contrast is enormous: "For you have not come to [a mountain]

that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which [sound was such that] those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." And so terrible was the sight, [that] Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of [the] righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than [the blood] of Abel" (Heb 12:18-24).

Verses 21-25 | Approaching the LORD

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. 22 Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, or else the LORD will break out against them." 23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.'" 24 Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up [again], you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them." 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Moses is the only one who may come into the presence of the LORD. It seems that he is only on his way to meet the LORD when the LORD sends him back because the people in their boldness may try to approach the LORD. He must stop them from doing so by warning them that no one should try to see anything of God. Seeing Him means death. The priests receive a separate warning. Those who are allowed to approach as the only class of the people must behave in an appropriate manner. Moses believes that sufficient precautions have been taken, but the LORD knows the heart of the people and Moses must go.

For us who are children of God, approaching Him is no longer threatening. The glory of God no longer frightens, for we see it in the face of Jesus Christ (2Cor 4:6 ; Jn 1:18; 2Cor 3:18).

After Moses has passed on the warning of God to the people, Moses and Aaron may ascend to God. Together they are a picture of the Lord Jesus. Moses is a picture of Him as the One Who speaks to the people on behalf of God, and Aaron is a picture of Him as the One Who represents the people to God. The Lord Jesus is called “the Apostle [Moses] and High Priest [Aaron] of our confession” (Heb 3:1).

Exodus 20

Introduction

The first part of this chapter contains the ten commandments, also called “the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exo 34:28). These commandments are addressed to a people delivered from Egypt. In their redemption from Egypt the LORD has shown the smallness of all the gods of Egypt and His exaltedness above them. By the redemption of His people He has also committed them to Himself. They belong to Him and no one else. That must appear from their whole lives. With them the LORD makes this covenant at the Sinai – nowhere else and with no one else.

The number ten represents responsibility. The meaning of the law is: Do this and you will live. Scripture says: “He who practices them shall live by them” (Gal 3:12b; Lev 18:5). The letter to the Galatians makes it clear that no human being can acquire and has acquired life on that basis, that is to say on the basis of responsibility. On the contrary, on that basis there is no hope for man: “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith”” (Gal 3:10-11).

For the believer who belongs to the church, it is not ‘do and live’, but ‘live and do’. The righteous live by faith. The whole letter to the Galatians makes it clear that law and faith exclude each other completely, for “the Law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12a). He who believes is “not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

This does not mean that, as a believer, he is now able to keep the law or is supposed to keep the law. The law is not meant for him: “We know ... that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious etc.”, that is for sinners, for people who live according to the flesh (1Tim 1:8-11). The law is a mirror that shows to man where he fails, that he may confess his sins and take refuge in Christ.

The law reveals sins, but is not or does not provide a means to wash them away. He who transgresses the law dies without mercy. This is the requirement of the law: “Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on [the testimony of] two or three witnesses” (Heb 10:28). The law is also negative by definition, “you shall not”. It consists mainly of things that are prohibited. The law condemns the sinful actions of man.

The law does not fully show Who God is, but shows Him in His holy and righteous demands. Who God is, we see fully only in the Lord Jesus. The law indicates what man should be and reveals what he is. Man is inclined to transgress everything that is commanded and forbidden by the law of Moses.

The first four commandments deal with man’s relationship with God, the next six deal with a man’s relationship with his neighbor. The Lord Jesus also mentions this distinction when He, as a summary of the law, speaks of loving God above all else and loving his neighbor as himself (Mt 22:36-40)*.

Verses 1-3 | The First Commandment

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

This commandment affirms that there is only one God and that God is absolutely sovereign: “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is [but] one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we [exist] for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we [exist] through Him” (1Cor 8:4-6). God tolerates nothing beside Himself to whom honor must be given. Man is a sinner. He has turned away from God. However, he must have an object of worship. God knows that. He knows the heart of man. That’s why He forbids man to acknowledge other gods.

* For a more detailed discussion of the function of the law for the Christian, see the booklet [The Christian and the law](#).

Verses 4-6 | The Second Commandment

4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

This commandment makes it clear that the worship of God must take place in a spiritual way. Every image of God that a man makes is a product of his human, by sin corrupted spirit. Such a product must be an insult to God. It is the downgrading of the only, sovereign God to the level of man or the creature. As if God is equal to what He has made.

The commands in the New Testament are: “Flee from idolatry” (1Cor 10:14) and “guard yourselves from idols” (1Jn 5:21). Idolatry is anything that comes between the soul and God, or the Lord Jesus, and takes Their place.

Making an image also means that you form an idea of God that suits you. It is a god that you have thought up yourself. It is not the God of the Bible in which He presents Himself as Light, “God is light” (1Jn 1:5) and Love, “God is love” (1Jn 4:8,16). Whoever emphasizes one of these two at the expense of the other, has a representation of God that is wrong. If man gives up the true knowledge of God, as revealed in the Bible, he will fall into idolatry, the worship of material things, behind which demons are concealed.

Nothing of creation may be introduced into the service of God. A service prearranged by man in a certain form (liturgy) should not have a place.

Verse 7 | The Third Commandment

7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

The Name is the essence of God. Respect for that Name is required of man. Vain use means using His Name to reinforce man’s own words (cf. Mt 5:33-37) or in situations where God’s Name is linked to man’s own will and sin.

We can also apply this to the coming together of believers. If we come together in the Name of the Lord Jesus (Mt 18:20), but we arrange the service ourselves, His Name is also used in vain.

Verses 8-11 | The Fourth Commandment

8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; [in it] you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

God forbids man to do any work on the seventh day. He connects it to His rest, after He created the heavens and the earth in the six preceding days (Gen 2:2-3). By keeping this day, man can show par excellence that he knows his place in creation and wants to take it in relation to God. God wants His people to share in His rest and to do so consciously. Therefore, this commandment begins with “remember”.

Sunday did not replace the sabbath. The New Testament gives us no indication of this. The sabbath belongs to the law and the old creation. The sabbath does not apply to the Christian, for a Christian is “not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Nor does he belong to the old creation, for in Christ he is “a new creation” (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

However, the first day of the week is pre-eminently the day on which the New Testament believer remembers the redemption from the power of sin. The Lord Jesus instituted His Supper for this, which we may celebrate on the first day of the week. He said: “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1Cor 11:24-25). In doing so, He asks us to think of Him and of the work He has accomplished for our salvation.

Verse 12 | The Fifth Commandment

12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

The fifth to the ninth commandments are about our behavior toward our neighbors in society. Each of these commandments has a New Testament counterpart.

After respect for God, man should have respect for his neighbor and, in the first place, for his parents. The parents represent the authority of God in creation. God links a special promise to obedience to this commandment.

This commandment is quoted by the apostle Paul when he addresses children and tells them to obey their parents (Eph 6:1-3). By quoting this fifth commandment of the law, the apostle underlines the importance of obedience. He does not cite this commandment because the believer would still be under law. It is precisely the letter to the Ephesians that has no connection whatsoever with the law, which lays down rules for the life of an earthly people. This letter places the believer precisely in heaven, from where his life is governed.

This fact does not, of course, lead the believer to act against the law. The point is that this fifth commandment does not involve a sanction, as is the case with other commandments, but rather a promise. That makes this commandment a special commandment.

The commandment as we read it here does not speak of obeying, but of honoring. ‘Honor’ is to give someone the place he deserves and also includes obedience. Honor goes beyond obeying. When children have reached a certain age and live by themselves or are married, obedience is no longer an issue. But honoring remains a command.

Verse 13 | The Sixth Commandment

| 13 *“You shall not murder.*

The sixth commandment demands respect for life as created by God. Life belongs to Him. Instead of the commandment not to kill, the believer is enabled by the new life – that is the Lord Jesus Who is his life – to give his life for the brother: “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1Jn 3:16).

Verse 14 | The Seventh Commandment

| 14 *“You shall not commit adultery.*

Marriage is an institution of God. What He has joined together, let no man separate (Mt 19:3-6). God's purpose is that in the marriages of the believers the connection between Christ and the church is seen (Eph 5:22-33).

Verse 15 | The Eighth Commandment

| 15 *"You shall not steal.*

This commandment demands respect for the possessions of others, which have been entrusted to them by God. Instead of stealing something, the believer is called upon to give it to others: "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need" (Eph 4:28).

Verse 16 | The Ninth Commandment

| 16 *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

This refers to the respect owed to the other as a person. False witness occurs when God does not have the pre-eminence. Instead of speaking falsehood, the believer is told to speak the truth and say things that edify the other person, and do not tear him down: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph 4:25). "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment], so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Eph 4:25,29).

Verse 17 | The Tenth Commandment

| 17 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

This commandment concerns relationships, and our attitude toward our neighbor and his property. This commandment shows the nature of sin. It teaches a person to recognize sin. It exposes sin in the depths of our hearts (Rom 7:7). The believer is able through the Holy Spirit to have desires that

glorify God. He may make these desires known to God “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving” (Phil 4:6).

Verses 18-21 | Israel Is Afraid

18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw [it], they trembled and stood at a distance. 19 Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” 20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” 21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God [was].

The LORD has given His law. These are the rules by which the people can approach God. But what is the situation? Fear and distance. They don’t even want to approach God. God knows this. He gives them the law to show their reluctance to approach Him directly.

In their wish that God will no longer speak to them, they indicate their unwillingness. They ask Moses to speak to them as spokesman for God. This spirit of unbelief, which leads them to use a mediator, will still reveal itself often. It is that spirit that leads to idolatry. Therefore, in the concluding verses of this chapter (verses 22-26), God again points out the commandment not to make gods beside Him and also tells them how to approach Him with sacrifices on the altar.

This scene is quoted in the letter to the Hebrews to show the difference between the believer’s position under law and under grace (Heb 12:18-21).

Verses 22-26 | Rules for the Sacrifice Service

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. 23 You shall not make [other gods] besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves. 24 You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall

*not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it.
26 And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will
not be exposed on it.'*

The people have heard the LORD speak from heaven. The content of His speech is: 'No other gods apart from Me!' This leads the LORD to tell how He wants to be approached. The contrast between verse 23 and verse 24 is great.

He speaks of an altar of earth and of burnt offerings and peace offerings. Both the altar on which the sacrifice is offered and the sacrifice represents the Lord Jesus. It is "the altar that sanctifies the gift" (Mt 23:19). The sacrifice He has made is therefore so pleasing because He has brought it.

The altar may also be of stone. That it may be an altar of earth or of stone, represents two sides of the Person of Christ. Man is formed from the dust of the earth. The Lord Jesus became Man. By the birth of Mary, He participated in being human and in all man's weakness, but without a sinful nature. He is the Son of man. Stone refers to sustainability, immortality. The altar of stone may not have been carved by human hand. Here we see the Lord Jesus as the Son of God.

God wants man to approach Him as a worshiper in a way He Himself indicates. No one should decide for himself how and where God is worshiped. When we meet in the place where we gather to remember His Name and take His directions into account, He comes to us and blesses us (verse 24; cf. 1Cor 1:2).

Worship must not be elevated by human means. Any human contribution, any human device, is prohibited. Whoever uses it does not honor God, but dishonors himself. In many religious circles a 'staircase' is used to arrive at so-called higher forms of worship. The most nonsensical forms are invented: falling, laughing, dancing, roaring in the spirit. There are more of these 'staircases' to discover. They lead man to a behavior that is unworthy of man.

All who worship are on the same level. A staircase suggests the exalting of one worshiper above another. A spiritual class is taking shape. That too is to man's shame and to God's dishonor.

Exodus 21

Introduction

God, Who knows all things in advance, after the law in the previous chapter, gives in the following chapters, Exodus 21-23, in a number of common cases, as it were, case-law, the application of the law. This shows that certain circumstances are also taken into account, things that can happen in everyday life. The cases discussed are models for all things that can happen among God's people.

We have God's directions for daily life in His Word. The Holy Spirit is given to us through Whom we are able to understand God's Word and to live for God's glory in obedience to His Word.

Verses 1-6 | The Hebrew Slave

1 "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them: 2 "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. 3 If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. 5 But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' 6 then his master shall bring him to God [Or: the judges who acted in God's name], then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

It is not normal to be a slave while you are a member of a redeemed people. This must be the result of special circumstances. It can be the result of poverty, which has caused someone to get into debt. If someone turns to poverty, it is already a judgment in a certain respect, for in obedience to God there will be no poor among them. But because of the need, a Hebrew can offer himself as a slave to a fellow countryman in order to eliminate his guilt.

God sets the duration of the commitment at six years. In the seventh year the slave is free again. If he has taken a woman with him at the beginning

of his period of service, she may leave with him. The situation is different if, during his service as a slave, he received a wife from his master. Then his wife, together with any children, remains the property of his master: the slave has come alone, he must also leave on his own.

Then we hear the language of love. The love of the slave does not only concern his wife and children, but also his master and him in the first place. The slave loved his master during his service to him. In his love he wishes to exchange his freedom for a life of service. There is no coercion, persuasion or manipulation. That is absolutely alien to love. As a sign that the slave remains forever connected to his master's house, the ear – the symbol of listening, of doing what is said, of obedience – is pierced with an awl at the doorpost.

It is not difficult to recognize the Lord Jesus in the picture of the Hebrew slave. He has offered Himself as a Slave to take away the curse that sin put on creation and to work the redemption of sins for all those who believe (Phil 2:6-7; Zec 13:5). He has performed a perfect service as a Slave. He is the obedient Man Who as the only One has fulfilled the law perfectly. He could have returned to heaven after His perfect life, without dying.

In His perfect love, however, He became a Slave of His free will forever (Lk 12:37). Love is the true source of service. His love concerns in the first place “my master”, that is His Father; then “my wife”, that is the church, the bride; and finally, “my children”, those are the individual believers – we are not children of the Lord Jesus, Scripture never calls us like this, but children of God. He allowed himself to be pierced through the ear. He paid with His blood, and acquired his wife, the church, and the children of God, for His property.

In Psalm 40 and Isaiah 50 we also read about opened ears.

1. Psalm 40 points at his *coming into* the world: “Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. Then I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me” (Psa 40:6-7; Heb 10:5).
2. Isaiah 50 points at His *going through* the world: “He awakens [Me] morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The

Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back" (Isa 50:4b-5).

3. Exodus 21 connects beautifully to this, for it refers to His *departure from the world*: He has surrendered Himself at the end of His life for His own to be an everlasting Servant to them (Exo 21:6).

It is nice to note that in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the expression "ears dug out for me", as it is literally written in Psalm 40:7 in Hebrew, is translated as "a body You have prepared for Me". Because the latter gives the true meaning, this translation is quoted by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 10: "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me" (Heb 10:5) The open ear is the means by which people listen, the body is the means by which the will is carried out.

Verses 7-11 | The Hebrew Female Slave

7 "If a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do. 8 If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her. 9 If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. 10 If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. 11 If he will not do these three [things] for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without [payment of] money.

The Hebrew male slave may be released in the seventh year after six years of service. This arrangement is not for a Hebrew female slave. She has been bought to please her master. If she disappoints him, he has to let her go. The condition is that he will not sell her to a foreign people. The purpose of this regulation is to protect her against arbitrariness.

He may also have destined the female slave for his son. Then he has to treat her like his daughter. If he takes another wife and does not sell her, but keeps her, he cannot evade his marital obligations. If he does, she is free to leave, without any purchase price involved.

In this female slave we can see a picture of Israel. Israel cannot go out freely, as the Lord Jesus was allowed to. The people are bought by God so that they may please Him. But the people did not please God.

Unlike the master in this section, God has sold His people in the hands of foreign peoples (Jdg 2:14; Psa 44:12; Isa 50:1). This is not faithless action on His part. On the contrary, it is because of the faithlessness of the people. His goal here is to teach the people the difference between service of Him and service of the nations (2Chr 12:8).

The female slave, Israel, will eventually become free. She will become the wife of the Son (Hos 2:19). Then God will deal with her according to that position. In anticipation of that time, the Son has taken “another woman”, the church. There is no relationship with Israel at the time the church is formed (Hos 3:3-5). Israel is now “Lo-ruhamah”, which means “not having compassion”, and “Lo-ammi”, which means “not My people” (Hos 1:6,9). God does not acknowledge Israel in this time as His people. It has gone away, away from Him.

Verses 12-14 | He Who Kills a Man

12 “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13 But if he did not lie in wait [for him], but God let [him] fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee. 14 If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him [even] from My altar, that he may die.

In verses 12-36 further regulations are given in case of violation of a certain commandment. We see how God takes into account different circumstances. He also takes into account whether and to what extent it is unintentional or deliberately.

In Matthew 5 the Lord Jesus also pays attention to the transgression of the commandments (Mt 5:17-48). He shows there that it is not only about deeds, but especially about the heart, the attitude that lies behind the deeds and the words. He has also revealed His own heart and has shown how much it goes beyond what the law requires. He has not only fulfilled the law, but also what goes beyond it. Nowhere does the law ask to give your life for the other. He did. That is where love brings you.

First, further regulations are given in case of violation of the sixth commandment (verses 12-14; Exo 20:13). The most radical form of violation of the law against his neighbor is to kill him, to take his life. As a general

rule, in the case of manslaughter, one must act in accordance with what has been declared to Noah (Gen 9:6). He who kills another, enters into the rights of God. Only God has the right over life and death. God has transferred this right to the government (Rom 13:1-7).

If someone accidentally kills another person, he can flee to a city of refuge, for which arrangements will be made later (Num 35:1-34; Deu 19:1-13; Jos 20:1-9). He can also take refuge at the altar. God allowed it to happen at his hand. That does not mean that God worked it, but has allowed it. The fact that nothing happens outside His will does not mean that He is responsible for it. He does have a purpose with what happens. In this case we can see that God wants to use this tragic event to bring the manslayer to His altar, a picture of the cross. But he who is not sincere in this, will still die (1Kgs 2:29).

Verse 15 | He Who Strikes His Father or His Mother

| 15 *"He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.*

He who strikes his father or his mother, violates the fifth commandment (Exo 20:12). The fifth commandment is the first commandment of the commandments relating to the relationship with one's neighbor. As with the sixth commandment, this is rebellion against God-given authority. This rebellion must be punished with the death penalty.

God's authority is represented on earth primarily by parents. Children who have no respect for their parents generally have no respect for any form of authority (cf. Pro 30:11-14).

Verse 16 | He Who Kidnaps a Man

| 16 *"He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.*

The kidnapping of a man means a transgression of the eighth commandment (Exo 20:15). Of all forms of theft this is the worst. Paul mentions the "kidnappers" in a list in which he gives several examples of people for whom the law is intended (1Tim 1:8-11). A kidnapper is someone who deprives another of his freedom and makes him or her an object from which to earn. This crime must also be punished with the death penalty.

In spiritual terms, this happens when someone makes another totally dependent on himself and can therefore manipulate him, so that the other can no longer be as God intended him to be. Man has been made in God's likeness (Jam 3:9). Therefore, every human being must be treated with respect (1Pet 2:17).

Verse 17 | He Who Curses His Father or His Mother

| 17 *"He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.*

Someone who curses his father or his mother violates the fifth commandment (Exo 20:12), as in verse 15. This is not a violation by a misdemeanor like in verse 15, but speaking scandalously about the parents. The death penalty must also be applied to this crime.

Children who abuse their parents by deed or word are deeply immersed in their natural feelings. They despise the most elementary relations God has given man in creation.

Verses 18-27 | Causing Bodily Injury

18 *"If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with [his] fist, and he does not die but remains in bed, 19 if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed. 20 "If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished. 21 If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property. 22 "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges [decide]. 23 But if there is [any further] injury, then you shall appoint [as a penalty] life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. 26 "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. 27 And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.*

The infliction of bodily injury is related to the sixth commandment (verses 18-19; Exo 20:13). A fight gets out of hand. There are no dead, but there are

wounded. The wounded may not work for some time. The forced rest period must be compensated. No further punishment shall be imposed if the injured person recovers to the point where he is able to walk again, even if it is still with the aid of a staff.

If a male or a female slave is struck so hard by the owner that he or she dies, the owner shall be punished (verses 20-21). He has taken someone's life away, and doesn't have the right to do that. If the slave does not die immediately, no vengeance shall be taken. His punishment is the loss of his slave and thus his service. The Christian master is expected not to strike his slave. He is told that he must refrain from even the threat (Eph 6:9; cf. Job 31:13-15).

The pregnant woman may be wife of one of the fighting men who wants to interfere (verse 22). She gets a blow and as a result she gives birth prematurely. The man who caused this must be fined, which is determined by the woman's husband and ratified by the judges.

However, if fatal injuries are inflicted (verse 23), either on the woman or on the child, the death penalty should be applied. We see here that the killing of unborn life – in our days: abortion – is judged by God as the infliction of fatal injury, to which the death penalty must be applied.

From a spiritual point of view, a quarrel can lead to nipping a young spiritual life in the bud. How much mental damage there is already in young believers caused by quarrels between adult believers!

The rule "life for life" (verse 23) is further elaborated (verses 24-25). Here we find the essence of the law: get what you did. That is a perfectly just principle. If God had acted according to the principle of "life for life" with a view to the death of His Son, He would have wiped out the world. But it is precisely at the time of the greatest crime that the Lord Jesus prays: "Father, forgive them" (Lk 23:34a).

The Lord Jesus also refers to the law of retribution, but makes it deeper: "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Mt 5:38-39). What the law demands is always just. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with "eye for eye" and "tooth for tooth". It should be noted, however, that

this should be applied by the competent court and not in the context of personal retaliation.

The disciples as faithful Jews have heard of the law of retribution, but grace goes much further. The Lord points this out with the words “but I say to you”. In what He says, He shows the spirit in which His disciples should act, as He did perfectly. It means that we do not defend ourselves against an angry neighbor, and that we do not let ourselves be humiliated just a little, but deeply.

The foregoing refers to situations in which we are wronged. Then, following the example of the Lord Jesus, we are expected to have that mind. If, however, we have done wrong ourselves, we will have to take into account that we will somehow receive back the injustice we have done (Col 3:25; Gal 6:8).

God also provides the rights of slaves (verses 26-27). If the owner touches the eye or tooth of a slave in such a way that it can no longer be used, the owner must release the slave. The owner therefore misses the slave’s commitment and has to replace it, which costs money. The slave is a bit better off. He has his freedom back. But he is also handicapped. His eyesight is limited, and eating food is no longer as easy as it used to be.

Verses 28-32 | Bodily Injury Caused by an Animal

28 “If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. 29 If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. 30 If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. 31 Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule. 32 If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his [or her] master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

If an ox kills someone, it must be killed. The animal killed for this reason should not be used as food because it must be considered unclean by its atrocity. The owner is not liable. He did not suspect that the animal would do this.

The owner is liable in case it is known that the animal is dangerous. If he does not guard the animal and it kills someone, the animal must be killed and the owner also. A possibility is given to pay redemption money, as a ransom for life.

Things in our possession can cause damage to others. This can happen through things we do not expect. It can also happen because of things we do know can cause damage to others. In the latter case, we must be attentive to how we use those things. Here we can make practical and spiritual applications for ourselves, for example: “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way” (Rom 14:13). And: “But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (1Cor 8:8-9).

The amount mentioned in verse 32 is also the price at which the Son of God in the form of a Slave is valued (Mt 26:14-15).

Verses 33-36 | Injuries Inflicted on an Animal

33 “If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, 34 the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead [animal] shall become his. 35 “If one man’s ox hurts another’s so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its price equally; and also they shall divide the dead [ox]. 36 Or [if] it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead [animal] shall become his.

Damage caused to the property of another person must be compensated. In case the damage cannot be repaired, an arrangement will be made.

All these events take place in the midst of God’s people. And what has happened to them has happened to them “as examples for us” (1Cor 10:6,11). It is therefore permissible to assume that in all cases a spiritual application can be made. In one case this is obvious, in the other case this is not that obvious. It is important that an application is not based on fantasy, but on a truth expressed in the New Testament.

When it comes to our possessions, we can think of everything that has been entrusted to us physically and spiritually. How do we deal with our money, our possessions, our capacities? Do we use it to bless or to harm others? If we have caused material or mental harm to others, how do we compensate them? Material damage, too, cannot always be compensated with a sum of money alone.

In general, the teaching of this chapter is that we must be vigilant that evil has no chance of manifesting itself within us. If we have done any kind of harm, we must be prepared to pay compensation. It is about an attitude that we do not want anyone else to suffer through us, either materially or spiritually.

Exodus 22

Verses 1-4 | Regulations in Case of Theft

1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 "If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

A theft – here we are in the application of the eighth commandment (Exo 20:15) – is considered on a case by case basis. Some differences are made. In case of theft and slaughter or resale, five or four times (2Sam 12:6; Lk 19:8) must be paid, depending on the animal that has been stolen. If the animal is still alive in the thief's possession, the thief must give double as compensation.

We see here that theft does not make someone richer, but poorer. Unlawfully obtained profit means the loss of one's own property. This can also be applied spiritually. Every man who lives to receive honor from men steals that honor from God to Whom all honor is due. He who lives to be honored by men will lose his human dignity.

The law also makes a difference between theft during the day and theft at night. It is assumed that the thief will break in at night. If he is caught and killed, the one who killed him will go free. In this case, the thief loses not only what he would have stolen and the compensation he would have to pay, but also his life.

However, if the thief works during the day and is caught and killed, the one who killed him will not go unpunished. It is assumed that it is not necessary to kill a thief during the day. You can then call for help. But in the night, everyone sleeps and the situation is incalculable. This rule shows that even the life of a thief cannot be taken for granted. We must not act out of revenge. The judgment on a crime must be established by the judge.

The great contrast of compensation in case of theft is the Lord Jesus. He has given back to God through His work on the cross what He did not steal: the honor of God (Psa 69:4b). Therefore, for all eternity, He will receive the honor He is worth and is due to Him.

Verses 5-6 | Special Forms of Expropriation

5 "If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed [bare] and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. 6 "If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field [itself] is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.

In verse 5 there is a case of acting intentionally. Someone steals the fruit of someone else's land to feed his own cattle and thereby spare the fruit of his own land. Here another is deliberately disadvantaged in order not to have to suffer any loss himself. However, the compensation means that he must give the best part of his own field or vineyard to the injured party. It is therefore important to keep control of one's own property and not to let it be detrimental to others. It is always spiritually important that we use our gifts for the good of others and not to harm them.

In verse 6 it does not seem that someone is acting intentionally. It is about someone who sets fire to burn thorn bushes. However, he does not hold the fire under control. It becomes a blazing fire, whereby standing grain from another person's field is consumed by the fire. The compensation consists of a full payment of the value of what has been lost.

As a spiritual application we can think of the following. A fire represents judgment. Thorn bushes are a consequence of sin. If sin reveals itself, it must be judged. It may happen that the judgment of sin in the church, an act of discipline, is carried out too far. Discipline must be applied, but if it has achieved its objective, it must also be lifted.

If someone repents and the discipline is not lifted, then someone is wrongly denied the blessing of the church. He cannot, so to speak, take pleasure in the fruits of the land. If discipline has reached its goal, it must stop, that such a one might not "be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" (2Cor 2:7). The compensation to be given is "to reaffirm [your] love for him" (2Cor 2:8).

In a personal application we can think of people who are frantic by nature. They are ready to act immediately when sin occurs. It is indeed good to act then. But because of their frantic nature they sometimes go too far and condemn the whole person. In this way they also destroy the wheat with the weeds. Then they have to confess their wrong or excessive approach and accept the other again with the good that is in him too.

Verses 7-13 | Properties Given to Keep

7 "If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep [for him] and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double. 8 If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, [to] determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property. 9 For every breach of trust, [whether it is] for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, [or] for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. 10 "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep [for him], and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, 11 an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept [it], and he shall not make restitution. 12 But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. 13 If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.

If something is entrusted to us, we are responsible for ensuring that it is not stolen. To entrust something to someone is a matter of trust. If it is stolen, the thief, if found, will have to pay double the amount. There is not only restitution, but also compensation for the shock and inconvenience, while the thief must experience that theft is punished.

If the thief is not found, there is suspicion on him to whom the money or good has been entrusted. The judges shall take the oath against him. By taking the oath, the suspicion is removed.

Much has been entrusted to us, believers. Timothy was instructed to keep the premises entrusted to him (1Tim 6:20; 2Tim 1:14; cf. Ezra 8:24-34). If we have lost something that has been entrusted to us, for example our peace, we must look for the 'thief'. We may have allowed something into our lives that has made us lose sight of the Lord.

It may also be that our worship has disappeared – of which the ox speaks. It may be that we are no longer serving – the donkey speaks of service. Or we have lost our behavior as Christians – the garment represents the outward behavior that people see of us. If it is found, it is replaced in double. Christians who have wandered astray and are back on the right path, will commit themselves with double zeal to the Lord.

Verses 14-15 | Borrowed Things

14 “If a man borrows [anything] from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. 15 If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire.

What is lent has to do with the confidence of the owner in him to whom he lends it. The issue is: how does he deal with this confidence. Something you borrow is about using something you miss yourself, but need.

We may use what has been entrusted to another, but not misuse it. This applies both materially and spiritually. We must always be aware that we have received everything we have on loan: “What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1Cor 4:7).

Verses 16-17 | Lie with a Virgin

16 “If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her [to be] his wife. 17 If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.

This is an elaboration of the seventh commandment (Exo 20:14). An unmarried girl falls under the care of her father. If someone sleeps with her, that is, if he seduces her to sexual intercourse, he is obliged to marry her, unless the father refuses to give her to him. In any case, a dowry has to be paid. A general lesson is that parents may not be passed over while arranging a marriage.

We also see here that sexual intercourse is not without consequences. The girl has lost her honor and will therefore be more difficult to marry. The man who seduced her has to pay a full dowry. He too must realize that he has committed a sin by doing something that only belongs within marriage.

Verses 18-20 | Sins of Apostasy

18 "You shall not allow a sorceress to live. 19 "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. 20 "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed.

Sorcery (verse 18) and idolatry (verse 20) originate from the world of occultism, the world of the devil. Anyone guilty of this must pay for it with the loss of his life. These horrible sins are direct rebellion against God. It is an open defying of His absolute rights to the worship of man and certainly of His people. In several places in the Scriptures God's people are warned to stay away from them (Lev 20:6; Deu 18:10). Saul has not taken any notice of this commandment (1Sam 28:7-10).

Between these two forms of occultism is a warning against communion with an animal (verse 19). The fact that God's people must be warned against this disgusting expression of sexual intercourse indicates that they are capable of it.

In a spiritual sense we see this sin in Revelation 13, which speaks of a beast coming up out of the sea, a political power (Rev 13:1), and a beast coming up out of the earth, a religious power (Rev 13:11). Both beasts are inspired by satan. Occultism will reach its height in these beasts. Many of those who count themselves among the people of God will bow before them and testify of their intercourse with them (Rev 17:3,11-13).

Verses 21-27 | Stranger – Widow – Orphan – Poor

21 "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 If you afflict him at all, [and] if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. 25 "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. 26 If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, 27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear [him], for I am gracious.

Here the mercy of God radiates toward the weak in society. God stands up for them (Psa 146:9). It is not a social program for global improvement or a call to work for asylum seekers. It is about reflecting God's grace, something that can only happen through His people.

Because the Israelites have been strangers in Egypt, they must be able to imagine what it is like to be a stranger living in their midst. That should make them gracious toward them. In the same way believers must have compassion with people in the world because they used to belong to it. A haughty attitude toward the lowest sunken person does not befit a believer.

God is particularly concerned about the fate of the widow or orphan. To oppress them is pure exploitation and abuse of power. God hears their call of help and will avenge them according to the law of retribution.

Loaning money to a compatriot is allowed, but without charging him interest. It must be an act of mercy. Earning from the poverty of the compatriot betrays heartlessness.

If someone is so poor that he even has to pledge his cloak, the cloak must be returned to him in the evening. His poverty and then nudity evoke feelings of grace in God. God wants us to learn to share in His feelings.

Verse 28 | Attitude Toward Government

| 28 *"You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.*

The government – the judges or the judiciary – may not be cursed (cf. Ecc 10:20). If that happens, it is rebellion against the competent God-given authority (Rom 13:1-2). Such an attitude is a characteristic of the apostasy of the Christian faith (Jude 1:8). God wants the citizen to acknowledge and be in subjection to the competent authority. Paul is mistaken in this and must apologize, which he does by quoting of this verse (Acts 23:4-5).

Verses 29-30 | The First Fruits

| 29 *"You shall not delay [the offering from] your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. 30 You shall do the same with your oxen [and] with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.*

In giving the first fruits of the land, God's right to the land is acknowledged. The people are warned not to withhold anything from it. The temptation to keep what is due to God to oneself has been ingrained in man by sin.

The firstborn belong to the LORD, and in them all the people. The same applies to the livestock.

Verse 31 | Flesh Torn to Pieces

31 *"You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat [any] flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.*

Here God makes the great distinction between His people and the peoples around them. He has set His people apart for Himself. That they are His people is manifested above all in what they eat or don't eat. Here the emphasis is on what they shall not eat. Holy people do not eat food that is linked to violence. Such food is for the unclean dogs, who have no sense of holiness.

Believers should not feed on things to which clearly adheres the corruption of the world. The world has programs to watch and to be spiritually "nourished" by, from which the believers – "holy men", these are for God separated people – must keep a great distance.

Exodus 23

Verses 1-3 | Do Not Bear a False Report

1 “You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. 2 You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert [justice]; 3 nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.

In these verses we have an elaboration of the ninth commandment (Exo 20:16). Speaking words is not an innocent activity: “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:36-37).

Speaking nonsense is already bad, bearing a false report is even worse. Lie is used to conceal the truth. This allows evil to continue to exist and to do its depraved work. For the believer now it is true: “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25).

The majority of the people around us are motivated by evil and are looking for evil, they want evil and exclude God. What the majority wants is made the norm. That is the essence of democracy. God does not want the members of His people to participate in it. Justice should not be perverted, as is often the case now. The law is adjusted in accordance with what the majority thinks is correct. Because the majority does not take God into account, justice is twisted. We can think of things like abortion, euthanasia, unmarried cohabitation and same-sex marriage.

Justice must have its course. Lowering the level of punishment out of compassion for an insignificant person is just as wrong as giving preferential treatment to someone who is in esteem.

Verse 4 | Objects Found from an Enemy

4 “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him.

It needs a good mindset to give something back to your enemy that he has lost and that you have found. But with this action you can “heap burning coals on his head” (Rom 12:20).

Verse 5 | Help to an Enemy

5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying [helpless] under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release [it] with him.

Helping your enemy is also proof of a good mindset. Indifference is not appropriate for one of God’s people who is called to show Who God is. God has not been indifferent to our problems either. He has helped us to unload (spiritual) burdens. In spiritual terms, God also expects us to help people to “unload” their burdens (cf. Gal 6:2; Phil 2:4).

Verses 6-8 | Fair Case-Law

6 “You shall not pervert the justice [due] to your needy [brother] in his dispute. 7 Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty. 8 “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.

The warning to be fair is recurring again and again. The person who has to judge – in fact everyone has to do it, not only judges appointed for that purpose – is always in danger of being influenced or of being deceived. Those who allow themselves to be influenced, are open to the prestige of the individual or the acceptance of bribes.

Personal gain should not play a role in the case-law or in the overall consideration of what is right. Anyone who lets themselves be deceived and dragged along in a fraudulent case is too accommodating in the story that is presented. In both cases one comes to an incorrect judgement, while God does not justify the guilty party, but condemns.

God says: “I will not acquit the guilty.” The cross of Christ has given this statement an unimagined and unprecedented twist. Anyone who acknowledges his guilt toward the holy and righteous God, who confesses his sins and accepts Christ as Savior, and who believes that God raised Him up from the dead, is justified (Rom 4:24-25). “But to the one who does not

work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom 4:5).

Verse 9 | Attitude Toward the Stranger

9 *“You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you [also] were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

Here we have the same prescription as in Exodus 22 (Exo 22:21). Only here more explicit reference is made to the feelings, the state of mind, of the stranger. They know these feelings so well from their own experience because of their stay in Egypt as a stranger. We can think back to the situation we found ourselves in when we were in the slavery of sin, but it is something else to remember how we felt then. If we remember how we felt, we will not oppress the stranger, that is, we will not burden him with what he cannot bear.

Verses 10-12 | Sabbath for Land, Man and Animal

10 *“You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, 11 but [on] the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard [and] your olive grove. 12 “Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease [from labor] so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves.*

God prescribes here that the land must have a sabbatical year. Then it should not be worked on. What then grows naturally is for the poor and the rest is for the animals of the field. This sabbatical year is a test for the people with regard to their obedience and their faith. It seems that they have nothing for themselves and what the land will produce is also for another. Obedience to this commandment will show their trust in God. Faith is needed to act like this. Obedience is always rewarded by God.

The Israelite himself must rest every seventh day of the week. And not only he himself, but also all that is at his service as slaves and working animals. At a time when production rates determine life – something that has always been in the nature of man – it is important not to be carried away

by the desire for more. Greed and unbelief reign. God desires to let people share in His peace and to have fellowship with them. It is good to put daily business aside for a moment.

Verse 13 | Attitude to Other Gods

13 Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let [them] be heard from your mouth.

Serving the Lord is evident from the extent to which His desires are taken into account. To know them we need to learn them. The heart that lives with Him will want to put them into practice. When other gods receive our interest, the Lord and His service disappear from our interest. Interest in other gods starts already with naming their names. Do not utter the names, do not consider them worthy of uttering them (Psa 16:4).

Verses 14-17 | Three Annual Feasts

14 "Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. 16 Also [you shall observe] the Feast of the Harvest [of] the first fruits of your labors [from] what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in [the fruit of] your labors from the field. 17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

Other gods will lose their attractiveness to God's people and will not be worth their interest if their lives revolve around the feasts that the LORD would like them to celebrate to Him. Then He becomes the center of their lives. To stimulate this, He wants all their males to appear "three times a year ... before the Lord GOD" (verse 17). This means that they come consciously in His presence.

The purpose is to celebrate a feast to Him, to express their joy in Him and for what He has given. When He sees their joy, His heart is pleased. It is a joy in which He is central. Therefore they will not come with empty hands, but with sacrifices that are pleasing to Him.

The times when all men of Israel have to go to Jerusalem are related to “the Feast of Unleavened Bread”, “the Feast of the Harvest” or the feast of the first fruits and “the Feast of the Ingathering” or the Feast of Booths. For us it means to lead a life in which sin has no space (Feast of Unleavened Bread), in which the first and best as a symbol of our whole life is for the Lord (Feast of the first fruits), while we honor Him for all the blessings He has given us (Feast of the Ingathering). We may celebrate these ‘feasts’ every time we come together to Him. Then we will not come with empty hearts, but with hearts full of thanks and worship for everything He has given and above all for Who He is.

Verse 18 | Blood and Fat of the Sacrifice

18 “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning.

The LORD speaks of “My” sacrifice. What we bring Him comes from Him (1Chr 29:14b). Blood and fat are the central parts of the sacrifice. Blood is life and is for reconciliation. It should therefore in no way be sacrificed together with anything of leaven. How can anything of sin still be present in the work done by the Lord Jesus precisely for the purpose of eliminating sin?

The fat also gets a special mention. The fat speaks of the power of sacrifice. It is reminiscent of the power with which the Lord Jesus made the sacrifice. The fact that it shall not be remain until the next morning means that it must not become ‘outdated’. We will have to be impressed again and again by the power that led the Lord Jesus to sacrifice Himself to God. It is the power of love.

Verse 19 | First Fruits and Boiling a Young Goat

19 “You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. “You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

The first fruits of the proceeds of the land belong to the LORD. This expresses the right of the LORD to the entire produce of the land. Here is even talk of “the choice first fruits”. They are to be brought “into the house

of the LORD your God". It is unnatural to appropriate these "first fruits of the first fruits" for their own consumption.

The instruction not to boil a young goat in its mother's milk seems to be a lost text, but that is of course only appearance. Everything in God's Word is in the right place. It is in line with the above. Milk is used to feed and keep the young goat alive, not to connect it to death. It is unnatural to use milk in connection with the death of the young goat.

Those who do something like this show a lack of natural feelings. God has given His prescriptions so that man might live by them: 'Do this and you shall live' (Lev 18:5). That the commandment, which is to result in life, turns out to result in death (Rom 7:10), is not because of the commandment, but because of man himself. Because man is a sinner, he is not able to keep the whole law.

Verses 20-23 | Listening to the Angel of the LORD

20 "Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21 Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. 22 But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 For My angel will go before you and bring you in to [the land of] the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.

After all the precepts that the people must put into practice when they have arrived in the promised land, God gives a great encouragement here. He gives His Angel to guard them and guide them. He also points to the goal, to "the place which I have prepared". If He prepares that place, what a good place that will be! And if He guards His people there on the way, and guides them, how certain is the arrival.

The people are responsible for listening to the Angel (cf. Mt 17:5). Only when they listen to Him the blessing is guaranteed. Then God Himself will take upon Himself the protection of His people, and will stand up for them when enemies distress them. He will completely destroy their enemies.

The words “since My name is in Him”, make it clear that “My Angel” is the Lord Jesus. The appearance of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament, i.e. before He becomes Man, is that of an angel, usually referred to as the “Angel of the LORD”. The fact that this is about the Lord Jesus is also evident from the mention of “pardon” (verse 21). To pardon or not to pardon is the right of God alone, and the Lord Jesus is God (cf. Mk 2:7-8,10).

Verses 24-33 | God Promises Blessing and Help

24 You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their [sacred] pillars in pieces. 25 But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. 26 There shall be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn [their] backs to you. 28 I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. 29 I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. 30 I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. 31 I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River [Euphrates]; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. 33 They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for [if] you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

Warning has been issued not to mention the names of other gods (verse 13). Here is a warning not to bow to the gods of peoples who live in the promised land (verse 24). They must destroy those gods completely. These gods are a danger for their service to the LORD their God. They should serve Only Him. He does not tolerate another god beside Him.

Service to Him assures them of food, health, prosperity and safety. He shall bless their bread and their water, and shall ward off disease from them; miscarriage, barrenness, and premature death shall not be there.

They will live long in the enjoyment of the blessing, without fear of their enemies.

For us it is written in 1 Thessalonians 1 that we have turned from idols, that we have destroyed them, "to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1Thes 1:9-10). Serving God is also our calling. We may know that our work for the Lord is not in vain, or without result (1Cor 15:58).

The LORD takes it upon Himself to rid the land of their enemies. He does not do that quickly, but gradually. That is His wisdom. If He does it quickly, the people will never be able to work the whole area at once. Then it will become a wasteland. If they take possession of the land step by step, they can work it calmly. Their work will then keep pace with their numerical growth. That way they will be able to do the work.

This is also the case spiritually. Getting to know God's thoughts happens gradually. God does not suddenly open our mind in such a way that we know the whole truth at once. Taking possession of the spiritual blessings is a process, it keeps pace with our spiritual growth. If we have come to know a piece of the truth, we must first put it into practice. Then the Lord gives us to see a new aspect of it, then we discover something again in the Word. Often this happens after we have removed something from our lives, a certain sin or a wrong habit, which has hindered our growth.

That is why, at the end of this chapter, it is pointed out once again that no connection whatsoever is made with the inhabitants of the land or their gods. They are not allowed to let them live there, they are not allowed to give them space. To deal casually with this commandment will turn into a trap for them. We too must not give space in our lives to the world and its idols. It is significant in this context that John concludes his first letter with the call: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1Jn 5:21).

Exodus 24

Introduction

This section connects to Exodus 20 (Exo 20:21). The part in between shows the contents of what Moses has been told by the LORD.

Verses 1-2 | Approaching, but at a Distance

1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. 2 Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."

Moses is called by the LORD to come to Him together with Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu, his eldest sons, and a representation of the people. But "at a distance". This distance is characteristic of the relationship between the LORD and His people in the Old Testament. For the New Testament church this distance is no longer there. The letter to the Hebrews shows in detail that the New Testament believers may approach God boldly in the sanctuary. This letter also shows how this is made possible: through Christ and His work.

Verses 3-8 | The Covenant Made

3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put [it] in basins, and the [other] half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read [it] in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The ordinances communicated in the previous chapters are communicated by Moses to the people. As in Exodus 19 (Exo 19:8), the people promise to do everything the LORD has said (verses 3,7). In Exodus 19 they say this before they have heard what the LORD wants. Now they have heard His ordinances and say the same. Unfortunately, there is no knowledge of themselves. They will gain this knowledge by the ordinances of the LORD. This will show how much they fail in their promise.

Moses puts everything down in writing and in that way records it for the generations to come. As soon as there is a redeemed people, a people that God has separated for Himself, He records His thoughts for and about them in the written Word. The first time an event has to be written in a book, we find in Exodus 17 (Exo 17:14). God makes His thoughts known in the written Word. Everyone can know what God wants. His unchanging Word can be consulted over and over again.

Then Moses built an altar of twelve stones at the foot of the mountain. It is as if he realizes that the people will never be able to fulfill what they have promised and that they can only exist before God on the basis of a sacrifice. The sacrifices speak of the Lord Jesus and of the work He accomplished on the cross. The burnt offering is in its entirety for the LORD (Lev 1:1-17). The peace offering is a fellowship offering in which the fellowship between the LORD and his people is expressed (Lev 3:1-17).

He lets young men, probably the first-born, bring burnt offerings and peace offerings. This work will later be taken over by priests and Levites, who will take the place of the firstborn (Num 3:12). Moses takes young men, a new generation, to show the new generation, as it were, that this is the only true basis for God. The elders are bound by the law, and on that basis it will appear to be impossible to approach God.

Moses reads the contents of the book in the hearing of the people (verse 7). He informs them of the terms of the covenant. For the third time, the people declare that they will keep it. They say it even stronger than in verse 3, because here they not only say that they will “do”, but add that they will also “obey”.

Then Moses takes the people at their word. As solemnly as the people have declared to keep the covenant of the LORD, so Moses records this cove-

nant. This is done by sprinkling blood on the altar and on the people and the book. The sprinkling of the book is not mentioned here. Yet, according to what we read in Hebrews 9, this happened (Heb 9:19).

The sprinkling of the people seems to mean that they are reminded of death as punishment for disobedience. The sprinkling of the book shows that death is necessary as the basis of everything. Therefore, even the whole system of the law is not initiated without blood. The book contains the conditions for the covenant, the people are the covenant people, and the altar represents the LORD, the origin of the covenant.

Blood is God's answer to the people's repeated promise that they will do what God says. The blood is life poured out into death. This is what will happen to Israel if it violates the words of the LORD. This blood poses a threat.

This blood stands in contrast to the blood of the new covenant. From that blood flows reconciliation, forgiveness and blessing. With this we, New Testament believers, are sprinkled (1Pet 1:2; Heb 12:24). In the value of that blood, we, who are no better than those who were under the old covenant, can stand before God. That is what the letter to the Hebrews makes clear.

Verses 9-11 | The Representatives of the People See God

9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Although at a distance, they still see something of God's glory. Ezekiel saw something similar: "Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, [was] a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and [there was] a radiance around Him" (Eze 1:26-27).

What Moses, and later Ezekiel, see, is not the glory of His grace, but the glory of His holiness. It is also not so much related to the glory of His Person. What Moses and others see of Him is connected with His feet, which speaks of the way He goes in holiness. In it something becomes visible that is “as clear as the sky itself”. The sky in all its brightness is seen in the way He goes. What He does, makes visible what it is like where He lives.

That is perfectly seen in the life of the Son of God Who came from heaven to earth. “In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col 2:9; 1:19). God has come to men in a way that they are not consumed by His holiness, but attracted by His grace. Only in this way God, “who ... dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1Tim 6:16), could come to men (cf. Jn 1:18).

The fact that God does not send out a consuming fire to this company, but that they may behold this scene while eating and drinking, is a ray of His grace in the midst of the darkness and threat of Sinai. He tempers, as it were, the full glory of His majesty by hiding most of it (cf. Job 26:9).

Verses 12-14 | Moses and Joshua Climb up Higher

12 Now the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.” 13 So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 14 But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.”

Moses is called by the LORD to come to Him and also to remain with Him. He will remain there for a longer time. Moses does not come, as it were, only to visit, but takes up residence with the LORD. Not that he will always stay away, because he tells the people left behind to wait until he and Joshua return to them. But even when he is back, he remains in the spirit with the LORD. He lives and acts from his relationship with Him.

It seems that Joshua may accompany him a little further. After Exodus 17 (Exo 17:9) we find here the second mention of Joshua, and again in connection with Moses. He may gain the experience of coming closer to the LORD. The others have to stay behind. They may not climb any further up to the LORD.

During his absence Moses does not leave the people to their fate. He arranges deputies. The people can go to them if they have situations they cannot sort out among themselves. In the same way, the Lord Jesus gave gifts to the church during His absence, such as those of “administrations” (1Cor 12:28). In certain cases, they can resolve a dispute with the wisdom that has been given to them.

Verses 15-18 | Moses Alone Meets the LORD

15 Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. 18 Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Eventually Joshua has to stay behind and Moses goes on alone. For six days the cloud, the symbol of the dwelling place of the glory of God, covers the mountain. Moses is waiting all this time. He does not become impatient like Saul, later, who also has to wait, but acts impatiently and thereby forfeits his kingship (1Sam 13:8-14).

On the seventh day the LORD calls him. Then Moses enters the cloud; he enters the glory of God, to abide there forty days and forty nights. In that time, he gets to hear and see beautiful things from God in view of God’s dwelling among His people.

The glory that Moses enters seems to be a consuming fire for the Israelites. Here we see the big difference with the time we live in. Whoever have been made qualified for the presence of God will feel at home there. Whoever believes that he can please God on the basis of the law will always think of God’s presence with fear and trembling.

Exodus 25

Introduction

The tangible, material tabernacle and the service in it are “the copies of the things in the heavens” (Heb 9:23). The tabernacle is not the true dwelling place of God, but represents it. God does not dwell in “a holy place made with hands, a [mere] copy of the true one” (Heb 9:24; 2Chr 6:18).

In Scripture there are three real dwellings of God:

1. heaven (1Kgs 8:39a Psa 115:3,16),
2. the Lord Jesus (Jn 1:14a, where “dwelt” is literally “tabernacled”; Col 1:19; 2:9) and
3. the church (Eph 2:22; 1Tim 3:15; Heb 3:1-6).

The tabernacle is a tent in the wilderness. This can be applied to the church on earth, in which God the Holy Spirit dwells.

The tabernacle is:

1. a picture of the dwelling place of God among His people,
2. a picture of His glory as He revealed it completely in the Lord Jesus and
3. a description of the way of the sinner to God.

The description of the tabernacle is given to Moses by the LORD in one long speech in the Exodus 25-31. This speech – interspersed seven times with “the LORD said” or “the LORD spoke” – can be divided into four parts:

1. In Exodus 25-27 the furniture is described which in picture give the revelation of God in Christ to man.
2. In Exodus 28-29 we see the priesthood as the means by which man can approach God.
3. Exodus 30 contains the elements which show in picture how and with what man can approach God.
4. In Exodus 31 we hear who God designates to build the tabernacle.

Verses 1-9 | Materials to Be Collected

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall take My heave offering. 3 This is the heave offering which you are to take from them: gold, silver and bronze, 4 blue, purple and scarlet [material], fine linen, goat [hair], 5 rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I am going to show you, [as] the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct [it].

For the construction of the tabernacle the LORD wants to use the means that His people make available for it. Those means must be offered to Him as a heave offering. It is not set as an obligation, but is asked "from every man whose heart moves him" (cf. 2Cor 9:7).

If we bear in mind that the tabernacle is the revelation of God to man, we see that this revelation is linked to the mindset of the heart. Only those who 'heave' what they have beyond daily use and offer it to God as a "heave offering" share in God's thoughts about His dwelling place.

In all of the materials something of God and the Lord Jesus becomes visible. In the seven kinds of materials needed, we see a number of features:

1. metals – speak of what characterizes God's Being and nature;
2. fabrics – speak of the glory of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth;
3. skins – are derived from animals, and speak, like the fabrics, of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth, but more specifically in connection with His work on the cross;
4. wood – speaks of the perfect Manhood of the Lord Jesus;
5. oil – represents the Holy Spirit;
6. spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense – represent the inner, personal glories of the Lord Jesus;
7. precious stones – speak of the glories of God, as they are reflected in the individual believers.

All these materials must be used to make a “sanctuary” in which the LORD can dwell among His people. If it is our desire that the Lord Jesus can dwell with His people, the church, we will give Him our total life and everything we possess. The church is His house, but the picture of the construction of the tabernacle shows us how we can experience this in practice. Total surrender to Him is needed to work out the truth of being God’s house to God’s glory in practice in the gathering and living together of the church.

What the tabernacle should look like is not left to the imagination of Moses. The LORD shows him the model and he must make it like that. Thus Ezekiel sees in a vision the form and stature of the new temple which he is to present to Israel: “So that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them” (Eze 43:11; cf. 1Chr 28:19).

Verses 10-16 | The Ark

10 *“They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. 11 You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it. 12 You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. 13 You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. 15 The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. 16 You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.*

God begins with a description of the center of the tabernacle: the ark. It is most hidden from man, but most precious to God. There He dwells. The ark with the mercy seat on it represent:

1. the truth concerning *the Person* of the Lord Jesus: He is God (pure gold) and Man (wood) in one Person;
2. the truth of *the work* of the Lord Jesus, of which the mercy seat speaks (verse 17).

The testimony, the law, must be placed in the ark. This represents the Lord Jesus saying: “Your Law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). His desire is to do God’s will. In everything His obedience to God is expressed.

The ark must be carried by the Levites. The care for the ark is entrusted to people who have been appointed by God. In our time it means all believers. A special class doesn't exist in the New Testament church.

Verses 17-21 | The Mercy Seat

17 "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. 18 You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim [of one piece] with the mercy seat at its two ends. 20 The cherubim shall have [their] wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be [turned] toward the mercy seat. 21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you.

The mercy seat covers the ark in which the law is. The law condemns man. On the mercy seat are two cherubs who form a whole with the mercy seat. Cherubs watch over the holiness of God and are the executioners of His judgment (Gen 3:24). Therefore blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat. The blood says, as it were, that God's holy and just demands have been met. Judgment has been exercised, but it has been exercised over an innocent sacrifice, so that the guilty may receive forgiveness and go unpunished.

Verse 22 | God's Place of Meeting

22 There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

God is enthroned above the cherubs (Psa 80:1c; 99:1b; Isa 37:16). It should not surprise us that this is the place where God will and can come together with the people. God has found His full pleasure in His Son and in the work He has accomplished. The Man Christ Jesus is the "mediator ... between God and men" (1Tim 2:5). "God displayed" Him "as a propitiation" (Rom 3:25), that is the mercy seat.

God wants to meet with His children, the church, where the Lord Jesus is the center point and where His work is considered. There He also wants

to make known His will for the way He wants His people to go. Although the church no longer acts as a whole, God does indicate in His Word how He wants His church to conduct when they assemble (1Cor 14:26). Thus Paul also writes rules of conduct to Timothy, so that we as members of His church know how to conduct ourselves daily in practice “in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1Tim 3:15).

Verses 23-30 | The Table With the Bread of the Presence

23 “You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. 24 You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a gold border around it. 25 You shall make for it a rim of a handbreadth around [it]; and you shall make a gold border for the rim around it. 26 You shall make four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet. 27 The rings shall be close to the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table. 28 You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that with them the table may be carried. 29 You shall make its dishes and its pans and its jars and its bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. 30 You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

The ark stands in the holy of holies, the table stands in the holy place. The priestly service takes place in the holy place. The table is also a picture of the Lord Jesus. The twelve loaves of bread on it represent the people of God – the twelve tribes. The table with the bread of the Presence on it gives the picture that the people of God are presented to God by the Lord Jesus as food for Him. God rejoices when He sees His people in this way connected to His Son.

The table is smaller in size than the ark. The fellowship of God’s children is a smaller circle than the circle the ark extends to. The ark as a symbol of the Lord Jesus extends to all people. Everyone is invited to come. The table represents those who have come, with whom God can have fellowship.

The height of the table is the same as that of the ark. Both the sinner and the believer can only come to God through and in the Lord Jesus.

Just like the ark, the table also has poles. That means that we have to carry two things with us on our journey through the world:

1. The truth concerning Christ and His work, presented in the ark; and
2. the truth related to fellowship with God in the world.

Verses 31-40 | The Lampstand

31 "Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand [and] its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be [of one piece] with it. 32 Six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side and three branches of the lampstand from its other side. 33 Three cups [shall be] shaped like almond [blossoms] in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond [blossoms] in the other branch, a bulb and a flower—so for six branches going out from the lampstand; 34 and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond [blossoms], its bulbs and its flowers. 35 A bulb shall be under the [first] pair of branches [coming] out of it, and a bulb under the [second] pair of branches [coming] out of it, and a bulb under the [third] pair of branches [coming] out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. 36 Their bulbs and their branches [shall be of one piece] with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 Then you shall make its lamps seven [in number]; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it. 38 Its snuffers and their trays [shall be] of pure gold. 39 It shall be made from a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. 40 See that you make [them] after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

The lampstand stands, like the table, in the holy place. No sizes are mentioned for the lampstand, but the weight is. We cannot measure the glory of the Lord Jesus, but it can be weighed in our hearts.

The lampstand is carrying seven lamps. In this we can see a picture of the Lord Jesus who carries the seven churches: "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev 1:20). It can be compared to the table that carries the loaves of bread. A lampstand gives light, that is also the task of the local churches. The churches can only give light in connection with the One Who carries.

This light is spread in the holy place, in the presence of God. The light of the lampstand falls first on the lampstand itself. In the sanctuary we are allowed to gain more and more insight in Who the Lord Jesus is. The light also falls on the table representing the fellowship of the saints.

The arms of the lampstand come out of the shaft and form a whole with it. Thus the church was created by the work of the Lord Jesus and forms one whole with Him. The decoration of the arms of the lampstand speaks of the fruits of the work of the Lord Jesus.

The utensils (verse 38) serve to make the light shine brightly. The Lord Jesus uses all manner of means to let His own spread a bright light. Above all He gave the Holy Spirit to teach His church about His glory (Jn 16:13-14). The Holy Spirit directs the full light on Christ and wants to focus the full attention of the church on Him. If the church is impressed by Who Christ is, this will be reflected in the lives of the members of the church individually and in the meetings of the church in particular. To this end, the believers are exhorted: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1Thes 5:19).

Exodus 26

Verses 1-6 | Curtains of Fine Linen

1 “Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet [material]; you shall make them with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. 2 The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall have the same measurements. 3 Five curtains shall be joined to one another, and [the other] five curtains [shall be] joined to one another. 4 You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the [first] set, and likewise you shall make [them] on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set. 5 You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite each other. 6 You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps so that the tabernacle will be a unit.

God begins the description of the building itself with what covers the sanctuary. Of this covering, He first mentions what is most hidden from the eye of the person who looks at it from the outside. Only the priests can see the colored curtains in the light of the lampstand when they are in the sanctuary. The lower, most disguised curtain has four elements: “Fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet”.

1. The “fine twisted linen” speaks of a powerful service in cleanliness and purity. We see this in the life of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel according to Mark represents Him as the true Servant.
2. The “blue” reminds us that He is Man from heaven. Thus we see Him in the Gospel according to John.
3. The “purple” shows Him in His glory as the Son of Man. We meet Him like this in the Gospel according to Luke.
4. The “scarlet” shows Him in His earthly glory as Messiah. That is how the gospel according to Matthew describes him.

Cherubs must be made on the curtains. Cherubs are angelic figures who, as it were, ensure that the service in God’s sanctuary takes place in a way

that suits God's holiness. In reality, these angels ensure that God's law is fulfilled and also carry out the judgment of God (cf. Gen 3:24).

There are ten curtains. They have to be made into two large coverings by attaching two times five curtains to each other. The number five indicates responsibility. We have five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot. The number ten indicates a double responsibility. We have a responsibility to God and we have a responsibility to those around us. The law consists of ten commandments, with commandments regulating the relationship to God and commandments regulating the relationship to men.

In everything the Lord Jesus has answered perfectly to the will of God. He has made his hands and feet completely available for doing God's will. This should also be the hallmark of our lives as believers. For we read that after we are baptized, we are clothed with Jesus Christ (Gal 3:27), which must be visible (Rom 13:14).

The fact that five curtains are closely connected does not mean that there is no close connection between the two coverings of five curtains each. The whole of ten curtains remains. Both large coverings are namely provided with a row of fifty (= five times ten) blue purple loops. These loops "shall be opposite each other". The loops are connected with golden clasps, "so that the tabernacle will be a unit".

Here we see that this beautiful covering is called "the tabernacle". This is the very dwelling place of God. It is a beautiful illustration of Christ and the church that came into being through His work on the cross. What we find represented in the perfect composition of the curtains is a symbolic representation of what Paul says in Ephesians 2: "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone], in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:20b-21).

The clasps and the loops that connect the curtains have sometimes been compared to the greetings that are made. Greetings that are sent and given from one church to another or from one believer to another are a practical expression of the connection that exists between local churches and between believers. We find these greetings at the end of several letters in the New Testament.

Verses 7-13 | Curtains of Goats' Hair

7 "Then you shall make curtains of goats' [hair] for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains in all. 8 The length of each curtain [shall be] thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains shall have the same measurements. 9 You shall join five curtains by themselves and the [other] six curtains by themselves, and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent. 10 You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the [first] set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain [that is outermost in] the second set. 11 "You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and you shall put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together so that it will be a unit. 12 The overlapping part that is left over in the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that is left over, shall lap over the back of the tabernacle. 13 The cubit on one side and the cubit on the other, of what is left over in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall lap over the sides of the tabernacle on one side and on the other, to cover it.

Over the ten colored curtains are eleven curtains of goats' hair. The clothing of prophets is also of goats' hair. Prophets speak to the people when they have deviated. They themselves do not participate in this deviation. They are separated for God.

A goat is also the animal par excellence that is used as a sin offering. In the sin offering everything is judged that does not belong to God.

The curtains of goats' hair speak of the complete separation from sin. We see this perfectly in the life of the Lord Jesus and His service as a Prophet Who speaks to the people on behalf of God. Separation should also be the hallmark of the church. The church does not belong to the world and may not mix with it. It is precisely in the separation from the world that a prophetic message goes out to the people of the world to repent, to say goodbye to the world and to participate in the blessings of the church.

Verse 14 | Coverings of Rams' Skins and of Porpoise Skins

14 You shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red and a covering of porpoise skins above.

The third covering comes from rams. The ram is pre-eminently the sacrifice of the priest's ordination. It speaks of commitment to God. This is also

perfectly present in the life of the Lord Jesus. The church should also be fully committed to God.

The uppermost covering of porpoise skins is not nice to see, but it is weather and wind resistant. Nothing of the dirt of the wilderness penetrates through it.

For the world, the Lord Jesus has no stature or glory. Nothing is desirable to Him for unbelief: "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no [stately] form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isa 53:2-3).

Nothing of the world, not a single temptation of satan has taken hold of Him. This should also be the case with the church. The church is not attractive to the eyes of the world. You first have to be part of it to see its beauty.

Verses 15-25 | The Boards

15 "Then you shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright. 16 Ten cubits [shall be] the length of each board and one and a half cubits the width of each board. 17 There [shall be] two tenons for each board, fitted to one another; thus you shall do for all the boards of the tabernacle. 18 You shall make the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side. 19 You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards, two sockets under one board for its two tenons and two sockets under another board for its two tenons; 20 and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards, 21 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board and two sockets under another board. 22 For the rear of the tabernacle, to the west, you shall make six boards. 23 You shall make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. 24 They shall be double beneath, and together they shall be complete to its top to the first ring; thus it shall be with both of them: they shall form the two corners. 25 There shall be eight boards with their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board and two sockets under another board.

The boards are made of wood and are covered with gold. Each board represents a believer. He is a man (wood), but in Christ (gold) “made pleasant” (Eph 1:6) before God. All boards together form the tabernacle. All believers together form the church of the living God.

The boards stand upright on two silver bases. Silver speaks of the price paid for reconciliation with God (1Pet 1:18-19). Believers are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. They know two things – the two sockets – that are the basis of their faith. The faith in it gives the believers the certainty of the keeping:

1. that God has ‘delivered over the Lord Jesus because of our transgressions’ and
2. that He has ‘raised him from the dead because of our justification’ (Rom 4:25; 1Cor 15:3-4).

In that certainty they stand upright before God (Rom 5:1b-2a).

All boards have equal dimensions. As believers there is no distinction for God and every believer is accepted in the Beloved. In the functioning of the church on earth there are differences among the believers. Every believer has his own unique place. We see that in some boards that have a special place. The corner boards are used to hold the sides together. There are believers who have the special care that the believers stay together. They support the whole.

Verses 26-30 | The Bars

26 “Then you shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the boards of one side of the tabernacle, 27 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle for the rear [side] to the west. 28 The middle bar in the center of the boards shall pass through from end to end. 29 You shall overlay the boards with gold and make their rings of gold [as] holders for the bars; and you shall overlay the bars with gold. 30 Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain.

The four visible bars ensure that the whole remains well joined together (Eph 2:22). This can be applied to the gifts given by the Lord Jesus for the edification of the church, namely “some [as] apostles, and some [as]

prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers” (Eph 4:11).

The fifth bar runs through the boards and is therefore invisible. In this we can see the Lord Jesus Who, as the Head in heaven glorified and invisible to us, gives His church on earth the gifts just mentioned.

We see that all these boards are connected to each other. Believers are not separate from each other. They belong together, they form a unity. Being a believer on your own is not God’s thought. In the beginning the church is a unity. They are held together by four things, and they persevere in this: “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Unfortunately, believers are now no longer standing shoulder to shoulder like those boards are. There has come division and separation among believers. Yet it is still possible to experience the unity of the children of God in the meetings of the believers. The instructions for this can be found in God’s Word. We will then have to separate ourselves from the world (2Cor 6:17) and worldly religion (Heb 13:13) in order to gather as a church around Christ alone. If He is the Center and has the guidance and authority through His Word and Spirit, we may know that, according to His promise, He is in the midst: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Mt 18:20).

Verses 31-35 | The Veil in the Tabernacle

31 “You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.
32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks [also being of] gold, on four sockets of silver. 33 You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. 34 You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies. 35 You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand opposite the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

The veil forms the separation between the holy place and the holy of the holies. It has the same colors as the inner ten curtains and must be hung on four pillars. Just like on the covering curtains there are cherubs on it. Behind the veil is the ark, the throne of God. The cherubs guard the way to the throne. No one is allowed in, except Moses and the high priest once a year.

In Hebrews 10 we read that this veil is a picture of “the flesh” of the Lord Jesus (Heb 10:20), that is of His Person, as He walked on earth. When He dies, the veil tears apart and the way to God is free.

The four pillars on which the veil hangs can be applied to the four Gospels. In it we see the “days in the flesh” of the Lord Jesus illustrated (Heb 5:7), that is, His life on earth.

Verses 36-37 | The Curtain for the Doorway

36 “You shall make a screen for the doorway of the tent of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver. 37 You shall make five pillars of acacia for the screen and overlay them with gold, their hooks [also being of] gold; and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.

This curtain hangs before the holy place. There are no cherubs in this curtain. Through this curtain the priests enter the holy place. Before they enter, the curtain reminds them, as it were, of the glories of the Lord Jesus.

This curtain hangs on five pillars. The number five, as said, speaks of responsibility. It is about knowing how to behave as priests in the house of God, seen as a house in which we perform priestly service (1Pet 2:5). We can apply this to the five writers of the letters of the New Testament: Paul, James, Peter, John and Jude, who tell us that.

Exodus 27

Verses 1-8 | The Bronze Burnt Offering Altar

1 "And you shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. 2 You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. 3 You shall make its pails for removing its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. 4 You shall make for it a grating of network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. 5 You shall put it beneath, under the ledge of the altar, so that the net will reach halfway up the altar. 6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. 7 Its poles shall be inserted into the rings, so that the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. 8 You shall make it hollow with planks; as it was shown to you in the mountain, so they shall make [it].

The bronze altar is in the court. At the altar God meets man. The altar speaks not so much of the cross, but of the Lord Jesus Himself (cf. Mt 23:19). He is the sacrifice on the altar, but He is also the One Who sacrifices Himself, Who offers Himself to God.

He is completely consumed as the sacrifice, but not as the altar. The altar is of wood – which symbolizes that He is Man – but it is covered with bronze. This bronze comes from the censers over which God's judgment has passed and which have not been consumed (Num 16:37-38). Bronze speaks of the righteousness of God that has gone through judgment and has not been consumed. The Lord Jesus is not consumed by the fire of God's judgment. His resurrection is the proof of God's righteousness.

The four horns of the altar show the power of the sacrifice. The horns are a picture of strength and the number four speaks of the whole earth. The offer of salvation goes to all people: "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"" (Mk 16:15). All people can be saved on the basis of the sacrifice. Only those who actually repent and in faith accept Christ as Savior of the world are saved (Jn 1:12).

Halfway up of the altar is a grating. On that the sacrifice is consumed by fire. The sacrifice is thus located in the altar. It can only be seen by the priest when he looks over the edge. The suffering of the Lord Jesus, the fire that raged in him, can only be seen by believers who are aware of being priests. All believers are priests (1Pet 2:5), but not all are aware of this privilege.

At the altar there are also rings for the poles. This indicates that we should not only know that our sins have been removed by sacrifice, but that we carry this knowledge with us every day.

Verses 9-19 | The Court

9 “You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side [there shall be] hangings for the court of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for one side; 10 and its pillars [shall be] twenty, with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands [shall be] of silver. 11 Likewise for the north side in length [there shall be] hangings one hundred [cubits] long, and its twenty pillars with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands [shall be] of silver. 12 For the width of the court on the west side [shall be] hangings of fifty cubits [with] their ten pillars and their ten sockets. 13 The width of the court on the east side [shall be] fifty cubits. 14 The hangings for the [one] side [of the gate shall be] fifteen cubits [with] their three pillars and their three sockets. 15 And for the other side [shall be] hangings of fifteen cubits [with] their three pillars and their three sockets. 16 For the gate of the court [there shall be] a screen of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, [with] their four pillars and their four sockets. 17 All the pillars around the court shall be furnished with silver bands [with] their hooks of silver and their sockets of bronze. 18 The length of the court [shall be] one hundred cubits, and the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits of fine twisted linen, and their sockets of bronze. 19 All the utensils of the tabernacle [used] in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, [shall be] of bronze.

The court is a picture of:

1. the earth, where the Lord Jesus did the work of which the bronze altar speaks;

2. the Lord Jesus, seen in the fine linen of the hangings which people have looked at from outside; “the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev 19:8);
3. the believer, in whom people must also see the fine linen.

The pillars hold up the fine linen, but are not seen themselves. It must be the same with the believer. He must show the Lord Jesus and not himself.

The pillars stand on sockets of bronze and are connected to each other with silver bands. The bronze points out that by doing justice, by doing what is right in the eyes of God, the linen becomes visible in the walk. The silver indicates that in this commission believers are bound together by the price paid for their reconciliation with God.

In the court there is an entrance on the east side. The entrance is spacious and is formed by a colored screen without cherubs. It represents the invitation to man to approach God. There is only one door. The Lord Jesus said: “I am the door” (Jn 10:7). The door is on the east side, that is the side to which the sinner went (Gen 3:24; 4:16). It is also the side that speaks of hope for the sinner. That side is also called the side “where the sun rises”. In it we see a picture of the rising of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2), which is the Lord Jesus Who comes with redemption and blessing for His people.

Verses 20-21 | Oil for the Lampstand

20 “You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. 21 In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; [it shall be] a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.

The partitioning of the tabernacle is now ready enough that God is able to speak about what is needed for the light. The light is necessary for the priest to be able to serve in the sanctuary. The sanctuary is called here “tent of meeting”. It is the place where God meets with His people.

This is the first time that reference is made to “Aaron and his sons”, the priesthood family, in connection with caring for the oil so that the light can

burn. This priesthood is discussed in detail in the following two chapters before discussing the other parts of the tabernacle.

The oil that serves for light – and also for anointing – speaks of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20). The service in the sanctuary can only be to the joy of God if it happens under the guidance and in the power of Holy Spirit. The lampstand must be lit “from evening to morning”. That means that while it is night in the world, there is light in the sanctuary.

Exodus 28

Introduction

In Exodus 25-27 we see how God goes out to sinful man.

In Exodus 30 we see how sinful man can approach God.

In Exodus 28-29 we see the way in which man can approach God, and that is only by the priest.

Verse 1 | Who May Minister as Priest to God

1 “Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me — Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.

Not everyone may draw near just like that. God Himself chooses who of the people may do so (Heb 5:4). Everything must meet God’s demands. Only the priest may draw near. Not all the people are priests, although God has said: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests” (Exo 19:6).

There is a clear application to Christianity. Not that in Christianity there is a category of people who have been specially called by God as priests. That is one of the serious errors of the roman-catholic church. For the believers of the church there is a common priesthood, they are “a holy priesthood” (1Pet 2:5). The application is that only those who actually draw near to God exercise this priesthood. Many believers do not make use of this privilege. Unfortunately, they often do not know this privilege, often because of wrong teaching.

Verses 2-5 | Aaron’s Garments

2 You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. 3 You shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. 4 These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his

sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. 5 They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet [material] and the fine linen.

Aaron's garments are "for glory and for beauty". This is quoted in Hebrews 2 in application to the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:9). By this we see that Aaron is a picture of the Lord Jesus as High Priest.

The garments consist of six parts: "A breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash." The material and colors are the same as those from which the tabernacle is made. This closely links Aaron's priestly ministry to the ministry in the sanctuary, God's dwelling place.

The garments must be made by all those who are wise of heart. For us, the garments express who the person is. As said, Aaron as high priest is a picture of the Lord Jesus. In Aaron's garments we see the glories of the Lord Jesus reflected. If we are wise of heart, we will discover more and more glory in Him.

Verses 6-14 | The Ephod

6 "They shall also make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple [and] scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen, the work of the skillful workman. 7 It shall have two shoulder pieces joined to its two ends, that it may be joined. 8 The skillfully woven band, which is on it, shall be like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen. 9 You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, 10 six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth. 11 As a jeweler engraves a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them in filigree [settings] of gold. 12 You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, [as] stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial. 13 You shall make filigree [settings] of gold, 14 and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them of twisted cordage work, and you shall put the corded chains on the filigree [settings].

The first garment described is "the ephod". This garment is the most distinctive characteristic for the high priest. By means of a band, made of the

same material as the ephod, the ephod is fastened. On each of the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod is put a precious stone. On one stone are, in order of birth, the names of the oldest six sons of Israel; on the other stone, also in that order, are the names of the youngest six sons.

The colors speak of the different glories of the Lord Jesus, as seen in the four Gospels. The band shows the same glories (colors). The band speaks of service (cf. Lk 12:37).

In the stones on the shoulders of the high priest we see in the picture how the Lord Jesus carries all God's people, all God's children, all those born of God, on His shoulders to bring them before the LORD for a memorial. His strength, of which the shoulders speak, supports us in our journey through the wilderness. God sees all His own united with His Son. The Lord Jesus represents His people before God.

Christ carries His own on His shoulders. He also carries the lost and found sheep on His shoulders, plural (Lk 15:5). He carries the government of creation rests on His shoulder, singular, as it is in the original Bible text (Isa 9:6b). One shoulder is enough for Him to carry the creation, while He uses both His shoulders to carry His own.

Verses 15-30 | The Breastpiece

15 "You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen you shall make it. 16 It shall be square [and] folded double, a span in length and a span in width. 17 You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row [shall be] a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; 18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; 19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. 21 The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be [like] the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes. 22 You shall make on the breastpiece chains of twisted cordage work in pure gold. 23 You shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. 24 You shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. 25 You shall put the [other] two ends of the two cords on the two

filigree [settings], and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, at the front of it. 26 You shall make two rings of gold and shall place them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on the edge of it, which is toward the inner side of the ephod. 27 You shall make two rings of gold and put them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it close to the place where it is joined, above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. 28 They shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it will be on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece will not come loose from the ephod. 29 Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. 30 You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

On the ephod “a breastpiece” is visible. On this breastpiece are four rows of three precious stones placed and inlaid in gold, in total twelve stones. Each stone represents a tribe. Aaron must carry them on his heart and thus bring the whole people before the LORD for a memorial. The breastpiece must be inextricably linked to the ephod with gold chains and rings. The Urim and the Thummim must be placed in the breastpiece. By this God will make His decision clear to questions of His people.

The breastpiece is placed on the heart of Aaron. The heart is the place of love. On the stones that are put on the shoulders are the names of two groups of six tribes. That places more emphasis on the whole people of God. On the breastpiece there is a place for each tribe separately. Thus each individual believer has his own place in the heart of the Lord Jesus.

Every believer is a unique precious stone with its own glory and radiance. It speaks of the preciousness that every believer has for the heart of the Lord Jesus: “Since you are precious in My sight, [since] you are honored and I love you” (Isa 43:4a). He also knows each of his own by name, which also means that they are his property: “I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are Mine!” (Isa 43:1b).

We can also apply a tribe to a local church. In the New Testament letters, we see that each local church has its own radiance for the Lord Jesus. The

heart of the Lord Jesus desires that it is made visible. That is why the letter addressed to each local church speaks about what prevents this radiance.

The breastpiece also contains the Urim and the Thummim. With personal and collective problems we can turn to the Lord Jesus. The decision which He brings forward comes from His heart. If we think about that, it will make us accept the decisions, also the ones we think are unpleasant, as proof of His love.

Verses 31-35 | The Robe

31 "You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 32 There shall be an opening at its top in the middle of it; around its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, like the opening of a coat of mail, so that it will not be torn. 33 You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet [material], all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: 34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe. 35 It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the LORD, so that he will not die.

The "robe" is completely blue, the color of the sky. The Lord Jesus is the Man from heaven (1Cor 15:47). The opening at its top is made so that it cannot tear. This indicates that nothing can undo the high-priestly work. The Lord Jesus is High Priest "according to the power of an indestructible life"; He "holds His priesthood permanently" (Heb 7:16,24).

He exercises His high-priesthood in heaven. The results are being felt on earth. We see that in the hem of the garment. At the hem are a golden bell and a pomegranate. A Divine testimony is given (bell) and there is fruit for God (pomegranate). The sound is heard when entering the sanctuary. After the Lord Jesus entered heaven, the Holy Spirit came to earth to testify and form the church. The coming of the Holy Spirit has been accompanied by "a noise like a violent rushing wind" (Acts 2:2).

When the Lord Jesus comes out again, it will be for Israel. This too will be accompanied by noise, for the Holy Spirit will then be poured out on the faithful remnant (Joel 2:28-32).

Verses 36-39 | The Turban with the Plate of Gold

36 “You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, ‘Holy to the LORD.’ 37 You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. 38 It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. 39 “You shall weave the tunic of checkered work of fine linen, and shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of a weaver.

There is not only weakness in the people, where the people need the strength and love of the high priest. There is also sin. With this in mind, he has a plate of pure gold on his forehead. The Lord Jesus, as High Priest, ensures that all iniquity that clings to the actions of the people is disposed of before God. He is holy and through and in Him is His people sanctified.

The “tunic” is not visible to the people. We can apply this to the feelings of the Lord Jesus when exercising His high-priesthood. He is not occupied with His people as standing above them, but He is closely involved. He lives through everything together with His people (Isa 63:9).

The “turban” as head covering speaks of submission (1Cor 11:2-16). As a High Priest, the Lord Jesus is submissive to the will of God. The white linen speaks of His perfection as Man. The multicolored sash is reminiscent of His glory in every form of service.

Verses 40-43 | The Garments for the Sons of Aaron

40 “For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics; you shall also make sashes for them, and you shall make caps for them, for glory and for beauty. 41 You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests. 42 You shall make for them linen breeches to cover [their] bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs. 43 They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It [shall be] a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him.

The garments for Aaron's sons are more limited than those of the high priest. They are the same as Aaron's ordinary clothes. But also these clothes give them "for glory and for beauty" (verses 2,40). We may appear before God as priests in the same perfection as the Lord Jesus. He is our perfection. Only in Him are we pleasing to God. Without Him, our bare flesh, our nakedness, becomes manifest. Then God cannot maintain us in His presence.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. It is emphasized here that the priestly ministry is held before God. The high priest is "appointed on behalf of men", but it is "in things pertaining to God" (Heb 5:1).

Exodus 29

Verses 1-3 | Sacrifices for Consecration

1 “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, 2 and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour. 3 You shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams.

Exodus 28 and Exodus 29 belong together. Priestly garment, described in Exodus 28, alone is not sufficient. A consecration must also take place. Being a priest is one thing, performing priestly service is another thing. To do priestly service it is necessary to occupy oneself with the Lord Jesus and His work. This is shown by the sacrifices mentioned in Exodus 29. Its meaning will be seen later in this chapter as it describes how these sacrifices are to be brought.

Verse 4 | The Washing

4 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.

Before we can see the work of the Lord Jesus, we first need to be washed with water. Water represents the Word of God in its cleansing power (Eph 5:26). Washing away all impurity by confession, to which we come when we read in God’s Word how He thinks about things, precedes sanctification, consecration. We see this in 1 Corinthians 6: “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1Cor 6:11).

Verses 5-9 | Aaron and His Sons Clothed

5 You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; 6 and you shall set the turban on his head and put the

holy crown on the turban. 7 Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. 8 You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. 9 You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

After the washing to cleanse, the priest's garments can be put on. Its application is that we may be aware that God can accept us in His presence. We have the right garment for that. We are clothed as priests "with righteousness" and "with salvation" (Psa 132:9,16), yes, with Christ Himself, for we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). What is still needed is the foundation, the basis by which we can be clothed with Christ. We have this basis in the various sacrifices that are brought at the consecration.

Although Aaron and his sons are clothed together, the high priest has a special place. He is given special garments and anointed with oil before there is spoken of blood. This is also the distinction between us as priests and the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was also anointed with the Holy Spirit before He accomplished the work on the cross (Acts 10:38a; Mt 3:16). We have only been anointed, that is, we have received the Holy Ghost, after the shedding of His blood and the acceptance of the gospel (Eph 1:13).

The sons see how Aaron is anointed. Thus, we must first have some understanding of the Lord Jesus as High Priest to be able to exercise our priesthood as God purposed.

Verses 10-14 | The Bull as a Sin Offering

10 "Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. 11 You shall slaughter the bull before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 12 You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put [it] on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. 13 You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and offer them up in smoke on the altar. 14 But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

Of the three animals that are slaughtered at the consecration, the bull is the first animal as a sin offering. Aaron and his sons shall make themselves one with this sin offering, which is expressed by the laying on of their hands. For us, this means that we identify ourselves with the Lord Jesus in the spirit as the sin offering, which is as the One Who “Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross” (1Pet 2:24) and was “made ... sin on our behalf” (2Cor 5:21). Thus He has taken our sins away from us and we stand before God without sin.

The altar must also be cleansed with the blood of the sin offering. The altar speaks of the Lord’s table (Mal 1:7; 1Cor 10:15-21). The table of the Lord speaks of fellowship with God and with each other. It is necessary to always realize that sin may not have a place there.

Everything from the sin offering must be burned outside the camp as an abomination to God. The fat of the sin offering is not an abomination to God. That will be on the altar. Fat speaks of the power, the energy with which the Lord Jesus accomplished the work for sin. That is pleasant for God and we may tell Him that, sacrifice that to Him.

Verses 15-18 | The One Ram as a Burnt Offering

15 “You shall also take the one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram; 16 and you shall slaughter the ram and shall take its blood and sprinkle it around on the altar. 17 Then you shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put [them] with its pieces and its head. 18 You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD: it is a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

Just like on the head of the bull Aaron and his sons have to put their hands on the head of the ram that is offered as a burnt offering to the LORD. By identifying themselves with the sin offering, the unworthiness of the priest passes, as it were, to the sin offering. In the burnt offering it is the other way around: by identifying themselves with the burnt offering, the dignity and pleasantness of the burnt offering is as it were transferred to the priest.

The burnt offering is for God in its entirety and is for Him “a soothing aroma”. The Lord Jesus glorified God on the cross. He has revealed God in all His love and grace as well as in His righteousness and holiness.

Verses 19-21 | The Other Ram as Ordination Offering

19 "Then you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. 20 You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put [it] on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of his sons' right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the [rest of the] blood around on the altar. 21 Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle [it] on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons' garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons' garments with him.

After seeing the Lord Jesus as the sin offering and the burnt offering comes the actual consecration. This is done by taking the other ram to sacrifice it as an ordination offering. This ordination offering is a special kind of peace offering. The peace offering is a fellowship offering.

Aaron and his sons also have to lay their hands on the head of this sacrificial animal and identify themselves with it. Bringing this sacrifice expresses that we see how the Lord Jesus, in fellowship with His Father and in full dedication to Him, has gone His way on earth until death.

This should also be expressed in our lives. It is not about being able to follow the Lord Jesus in the work He did on the cross. That is impossible, in that He is unique, only He was able to do that work. What it is about is that our dedication to God is of the same character (cf. Eph 5:1-2). We see that symbolically represented in the following acts related to the application of blood.

The blood must be put on Aaron and his sons on the right earlobe, on the thumb of the right hand and on the big toe of the right foot. That speaks of our listening, obeying (ear), our conduct (hand) and our walk (foot). Our whole being is sanctified by the blood of the Lord Jesus. We must only listen to Him, only do what He says to us, only go where He wants us to be. The whole person must be dedicated to God, only then will our priestly service be acceptable to Him. Therefore it is mentioned again that blood has to be sprinkled on the altar.

Blood is also sprinkled on the garments. The whole external behavior as priests must be in accordance with the value of the blood. Then anointing

oil is sprinkled on it. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that true priestly service is possible and pleasant for God. It is about worship “in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:24).

Verses 22-28 | The Wave Offering and the Heave Offering

22 “You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), 23 and one cake of bread and one cake of bread [mixed with] oil and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread which is [set] before the LORD; 24 and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. 25 You shall take them from their hands, and offer them up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the LORD. 26 “Then you shall take the breast of Aaron’s ram of ordination, and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion. 27 You shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering which was waved and which was offered from the ram of ordination, from the one which was for Aaron and from the one which was for his sons. 28 It shall be for Aaron and his sons as [their] portion forever from the sons of Israel, for it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, [even] their heave offering to the LORD.

Certain parts of the ram, together with certain grain offerings, must be placed in Aaron’s hands and in the hands of his sons. All this must be waved before the LORD. Then it must be offered to God as a burnt offering on the altar. In particular, the breast of the ram is mentioned as a “wave offering” and the thigh of it as a “heave offering”.

With these acts the ordination continues. First something has happened for them: sacrifices were slaughtered for them. Then something happened with them: they were sanctified with blood and anointed with oil. Now something has to happen by them: they have to bring the wave offering and the heave offering.

As priests, we may know the work that Christ has accomplished for us. We must know that we are sanctified by His blood to be a priest. We may

perform our priestly service in the power of the Holy Spirit. We then gain insight into the qualities that have come to light in the Lord Jesus about the work He has accomplished.

The first thing mentioned is fat. Fat speaks of the energy, the perseverance He has shown in the way He has gone. With the fat also bread and cakes are brought. This is a grain offering and speaks of His whole way on earth until the death on the cross. In everything He has been perfectly pure and dedicated to God. All this we may wave back and forth and heave up and down in admiration before God's face.

When everything is waved back and forth, it is put on the burnt offering and offered up to God. This means that we worship God for all we have seen of the Lord Jesus. We will tell Him what a joy and satisfaction He must have found in His Son and all that He has done, all of which has been to His Father's honor alone.

We may admire His love, of which the breast speaks because the heart is there, which has driven Him to do this work. We may see the power, of which the thigh speaks, through which He has completed this work. The breast and the thigh are for Aaron and his sons. As priests, we are allowed to ponder particularly over the love and power of the Lord Jesus. The more we see of this, the more it will be reflected in our dedication as priests.

Verses 29-30 | The Follow-Up of Aaron

29 *"The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, that in them they may be anointed and ordained. 30 For seven days the one of his sons who is priest in his stead shall put them on when he enters the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.*

The priesthood service is always taken over by the next generation. As long as the church is on earth, God will ensure that He and His Son are honored. The priestly service in itself is for the whole life. That is what is meant when it is said: "For seven days the one of his sons who is priest in his stead shall put them on." The priesthood is especially connected to the place of meeting or coming together.

Verses 31-35 | The Ordination Offering as Food

31 “You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. 32 Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 33 Thus they shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination [and] consecration; but a layman shall not eat [them], because they are holy. 34 If any of the flesh of ordination or any of the bread remains until morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. 35 “Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days.

The flesh of the ram may be eaten by the priests. Thus the sacrifice becomes a part of themselves. To eat means spiritually for us, that when we read in God’s Word with hunger to know Him, we will be formed by that food.

The ordination of the priest lasts seven days. For us, this means that we are priests all our lives, and that we constantly perform this service: “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb 13:15).

Verses 36-37 | Atonement for the altar

36 Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. 37 For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, [and] whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

The place where the ordination takes place must be constantly connected to the blood. We must always check whether the place of ordination is still clean, whether nothing has entered that is contrary to the meaning of the blood. Sin that is not judged may not exist in the place where believers come as ordained priests to do their service.

Verses 38-42 | Daily Morning and Evening Offering

38 “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously. 39 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; 40 and there [shall be] one-tenth [of an

ephah] of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering with one lamb. 41 The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering and the same drink offering as in the morning, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. 42 It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.

God wants His people to remember daily that He can only dwell with them on the basis of a continuous sacrifice. Because the work of the Lord Jesus always stands for His attention, He can be with His people. He wants His people to be aware of this. If the people forget the value of that sacrifice to God, they forget the reason for their existence as people of God. Then there will be room for man. Then he starts to think he is important and deviates from God.

Verses 43-46 | God Meets with His People

43 I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. 44 I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. 45 I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. 46 They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

The continuous burnt offering is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. The Lord Jesus glorified God. God sees His people in Him and the value of His sacrifice. This is the basis on which God can and will dwell with His people, and meet them and comes together with them. He wants to be their God. He wants them to come to Him to honor Him, to worship Him. To this end He has delivered them from the slavery of sin.

Exodus 30

Verses 1-10 | The Altar of Incense

1 “Moreover, you shall make an altar as a place for burning incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. 2 Its length [shall be] a cubit, and its width a cubit, it shall be square, and its height [shall be] two cubits; its horns [shall be] of one piece with it. 3 You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around, and its horns; and you shall make a gold molding all around for it. 4 You shall make two gold rings for it under its molding; you shall make [them] on its two side walls—on opposite sides—and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. 5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 6 You shall put this altar in front of the veil that is near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over [the ark of] the testimony, where I will meet with you. 7 Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps 8 When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. [There shall be] perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. 9 You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar, or burnt offering or meal offering; and you shall not pour out a drink offering on it. 10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”

This chapter shows the objects needed to draw near to God as priest. It starts with the altar of incense. The altar of incense is the second altar. It is in the holy place, just before the veil. The first altar, the altar of burnt offering, is in the court. The altar of burnt offering is of bronze, the altar of incense is of gold. Bronze speaks of the righteousness of God, gold speaks of the glory of God.

The incense represents prayer and worship (Psa 141:2; Rev 5:8). The altar is a picture of the Lord Jesus. He brings our incense, which are our prayers and worship, to God (Rev 8:3-4), making it pleasing to God. That the altar is placed “in front of the mercy seat” is also a reminder of the Lord Jesus as the Advocate with the Father: “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one” (1Jn 2:1).

The dimensions of the altar of incense are smaller than those of the altar of burnt offering. The altar of burnt offering is there for all people: everyone can be saved on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus. The altar of incense is only for those who have been saved, who can draw near as priests with worship to God.

The poles indicate that it is a service that takes place in the wilderness. We may enter the sanctuary in spirit, while our feet are still on earth.

The sacrifice of incense is directly linked to the lighting of the lamps by Aaron. This speaks of the fact that Divine light is needed to worship God. We need to know how He wants us to worship Him (Jn 4:24). There should be nothing from ourselves, nothing from our own thoughts. God wants to hear from us about His Son what He sees in Him. In His Word He revealed His thoughts about His Son (Mt 3:17; 17:5). Through His Spirit we may see this too.

Verses 11-16 | The Contribution at the Census

11 The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them. 13 This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the LORD. 14 Everyone who is numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the LORD. 15 The rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than the half shekel, when you give the contribution to the LORD to make atonement for yourselves. 16 You shall take the atonement money from the sons of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves."

The contribution related to the census shows for whose benefit the priestly service is performed: a redeemed people. At the census, every person comes personally before God's face. This means judgment because man is a sinner. But that judgment passes over those for whom payment has been made.

This is not about blood, but about money. Blood speaks of reconciliation. Money is paid as an acknowledgment of the right God has to everyone, here especially in connection with the sanctuary.

With this contribution, the amount is the same for everyone. The poor and the rich pay the same amount. God deals without regard to the person (Acts 10:34 Job 34:19). Every child of God must be aware of God's full right over him, whether he has recently repented or has known the Lord for some time, whether he knows much or little of the Lord Jesus (Pro 22:2).

David once took a census of the people. After that census, a punishment has come upon the people. The cause is that he wanted to know the strength of his people for himself. He has forgotten the contribution that expresses the acknowledgment of God's right over His people (1Chr 21:1-28).

Verses 17-21 | The Laver

17 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18 "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. 19 Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; 20 when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire [sacrifice] to the LORD. 21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations."

The laver shows on what condition the priestly service is to be performed. This cleansing is not about cleansing the sinner. In the laver only the hands and feet are washed, while the sinner has to be washed completely. This has already happened to the priest (Exo 29:4). This is about the daily cleansing, about the fact that we are defiled daily because of our walk through the world.

There are four cleansings of the believer:

1. The worst form of defilement is because of a sin we have committed in our lives. Cleansing of this is done by a sin offering (Lev 4:1-35). We must confess that sin, and again realize – that is, see and acknowledge – that the Lord Jesus had to die for that sin.

2. The second defilement is caused by contact with death. Numbers 19 indicates how to become cleansed from this (Num 19:1-22). This is the case when we go through the world and see or hear things that defile our minds. Then we need cleansing water. By reading God's Word we become clean.
3. The third form is self-examination in the light of God's Word before we enter the holy place to do priestly service. We see that in the laver.
4. The fourth form has to do with an even higher form of fellowship, that with the Father and the Son. There is no picture of this in the Old Testament. For this we see the Lord Jesus engaged in John 13 (Jn 13:1-11) to give His own part with Him (Jn 13:8b).

No dimensions are given of the laver. This indicates that there is no limit to God's ability and patience to cleanse.

Verses 22-33 | The Holy Anointing Oil

22 Moreover, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 "Take also for yourself the finest of spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred [shekels], and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty, 24 and of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin. 25 You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, 27 and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, 28 and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand. 29 You shall also consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy. 30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister as priests to Me. 31 You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be poured on anyone's body, nor shall you make [any] like it in the same proportions; it is holy, [and] it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever shall mix [any] like it or whoever puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people.'"

The holy anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). The different spices symbolize the glories of Christ. These glories become manifest

in believers who use the gift of grace they have received from the Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit works in and among the believers, it will spread a precious fragrance (Psa 133:1-2). Where He works, the glory of Christ is revealed.

All objects and utensils of the tabernacle are only used after they have been anointed. Everything in the service for God has value only if it happens as a work of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can come to God that does not come from Him (cf. 1Chr 29:14b) and in what comes to Him, Christ must be present (Jn 5:23b). In our service, the glory of Christ must become visible in every element of it.

Only that which is sanctified to God may be anointed with this oil. People who have no life from God can give the impression that they are in the service of God. There may also be elements in a service to God that appear to have been anointed, but are not. We recognize those people who seem to serve God for example in liberal theologians and those elements for example in preaching universalism, meaning that all people and even the devil will be saved at last. This is evil in the eyes of God. It may have no place in the service to God and must be eradicated.

Verses 34-38 | The Holy Incense

34 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take for yourself spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each. 35 With it you shall make incense, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, [and] holy. 36 You shall beat some of it very fine, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you. 37 The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. 38 Whoever shall make [any] like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people."

The anointing oil is for the service, the incense is directly for God. It is the added value to the sacrifices. That is why the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is so pleasing to God because He has brought it. The glory of His Person made the sacrifice so perfectly pleasing.

Everything with Him is perfectly balanced, “of each” there shall be “an equal part”. He shows perfect love where it is needed and perfect holiness where it is needed. God wants us to remind Him of this.

We can only look at Him ‘in part’. Our knowing is partial, i.e. in parts or piece by piece (1Cor 13:12). We have to look at each part separately and we are not able to know everything to its full extent. Only God sees all parts in their perfect coherence: no one knows the Son except the Father (Mt 11:27a). But we can enjoy it. If we sacrifice this incense to God, if we tell Him about the perfection of His Son, we also smell the glory of it.

Just as with the anointing oil the LORD forbids man to make anything from it for himself. It is holy to the LORD, which means that it is only for Him. In him who wants to shine himself with what he has seen of the Lord Jesus, sin will manifest itself. Such a person must be removed from among the believers (1Cor 5:13b).

A picture of this we see in what happened with King Uzziah. He wants to sacrifice incense against the explicit commandment of the LORD. Then leprosy breaks out on his forehead and he is driven out of the temple (2Chr 26:16-21). Counterfeiting in the service to God sets His rights and desires aside. He cannot let this happen unpunished.

Exodus 31

Verses 1-11 | Who May Build the Tabernacle

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all [kinds of] craftsmanship, 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, 5 and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all [kinds of] craftsmanship. 6 And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent, 8 the table also and its utensils, and the pure [gold] lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand, 10 the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, [with which] to carry on their priesthood; 11 the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make [them] according to all that I have commanded you.”

God has explained to Moses what the tabernacle, His dwelling place, should look like. Now He announces who is allowed to build the tabernacle. These cannot just be people who are in the mood for it. God designates them Himself. He knows the qualities of every member of His people. He gave them at birth. But the qualities are not enough either. It is necessary that He provides them with His Spirit and the necessary wisdom in their natural qualities.

He calls Bezalel by his name. Bezalel means ‘in the shadow of God’. Therein lies an important characteristic for the service: service can only be performed in dependence on God and not in own strength or according to one’s own insight. A shadow is not the person himself, but refers to the person whose shadow it is. The servant is not important, but God.

He is the son of Uri, meaning ‘enlightened’. The enlightenment of the Spirit is necessary for this work. He is also the son of Hur, which means ‘pure’.

In the service everything must be in accordance with God's holiness and purity. Nothing of man, nothing of sin, may stick to it. He comes from the tribe of Judah, which means 'praiser of God'.

This Bezalel receives from God all that is necessary to work with all that is brought by the people for the construction of the tabernacle. But he doesn't have to work alone. He gets help. He doesn't have to search for it himself. God takes care of that. He knows who suits him. Thus God places every member in the body, so that the members can serve each other. No member can function on his own. The members need each other, but God determines the function (1Cor 12:11).

Oholiab means 'the father's tent'. He is aware of his task. He is the son of Ahisamach, which means 'brother of support'. He knows that he is there for the other, in this case for Bezalel. He comes from the tribe of Dan. This is the darkest tribe, but in His grace God also uses people from that tribe. We see this also with the construction of the temple (2Chr 2:13-14). The grace of God is greater than our background.

Besides Bezalel and Oholiab, God has added more people to the building. These are all people who are naturally artistic or wise. God puts His wisdom in their hearts. Thus they are able to make all that He has commanded Moses.

In the list of the objects and utensils to be made, we see the tasks that each is assigned. Those who are allowed to build the tent of meeting represent in spiritual application those who have special insight into the church of God and its coming together. Those who may build the ark of the testimony represent those who have special insight into the Person of the Lord Jesus. Those who may make the mercy seat represent those who have a great understanding of reconciliation.

The table and its utensils point to the fellowship of the believers. Those who work on it present those who want to ensure that this mutual fellowship can be maintained as something in which God finds His joy, His food. The lampstand represents the light that is spread in the sanctuary. Those who are working on this represent those who have a great deal of insight into the blessings of the heavenly places and can tell their fellow believers much about them.

The altar of incense represents Christ Who is a soothing aroma to God. It is, spiritually applied, made by those who have much insight into the glories of Christ. The altar of burnt offering is made by people who understand what the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross means to God. The laver is made by people who take their sanctification seriously.

The garments are made by those who are ordained in the priestly service of the Lord Jesus and of themselves, who know that they are priests and who also perform the priestly service. The anointing oil is prepared by people who want to be guided by the Holy Spirit in everything they do. The incense is composed by those who know what prayer is.

A brother in China once told me a nice practical application of this. He knew three leaders of house churches who have been of great help to many house churches. All three had a nickname derived from the tabernacle. Brother John Sung was called 'altar' because he burned for the gospel. Brother Wang Mieng Dao was called 'laver' because in his preaching he put the emphasis on holiness and cleansing. Brother Charles Lee was called 'sanctuary' because he knew the Scriptures so well.

In this way we may also know brothers and sisters who, in the service they do, remind us by their way of working of certain aspects of the tabernacle. In fact, we should all have a certain characteristic. After all, we are all members of the body of Christ, each with his own specific task. We also all work together to build up the church, the house of God, each with his own specific gift.

In this way, we complement each other, without claiming that what we are allowed to do is more important than what anyone else is doing. In general, for the believers, it is true that they may know and enjoy all these things and will enjoy what others have discovered of the different truths presented in the objects and utensils of the tabernacle. Thus they together grow up into Him Who is the Head of the church and of Whom everything comes: "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him who is the head, [even] Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph 4:15-16).

Verses 12-17 | The Sabbath

12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for [this] is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16 So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' 17 It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased [from labor], and was refreshed."

The LORD has almost finished speaking with Moses. For the seventh and last time we read in His speech to Moses: "The LORD spoke ..., saying." And this seventh time is the introduction to the sabbath, the seventh day of the week, the day of rest for Israel.

This day looks forward to the rest of the millennial kingdom of peace. There all the work of God and all that has been done for Him ends up. God wants to remind His people of this. He also wants them to remember this constantly and to observe that day. Working on that day means not taking God's commandment into account. It is punishable by death.

The sabbath is the sign of the covenant between the LORD and His earthly people. God has set that day Himself after He has completed His creation work. On that day "He ceased [from labor], and was refreshed". God wants His people to share in it with Him. That is a great grace.

This is the end of the LORD's speech to Moses.

Verse 18 | The Tablets of Stone

18 When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

The tablets of stone set out to us the responsibility of the people. This responsibility contrasts sharply with the purpose of God, of which He spoke with Moses. While He gives the tablets of stone, He knows how the people are behaving at the foot of the mountain. The following chapter gives the details of this.

Exodus 32

Verse 1 | The People Ask for an Idol

1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

In the previous chapters we have seen Who God is. Here we see who man, His people, is. By that we learn to admire God more, because despite the sin of the people the tabernacle is built from Exodus 35 onward. God comes to dwell with a people who have misbehaved themselves like this.

The people are getting impatient. Moses stays away for so long. They do not realize that Moses is on the mountain for their benefit. They speak of him as "this Moses". There is a scornful sound in it. There is no trust in him nor in the LORD because they "do not know what has become of him". And all this while they saw him enter the cloud of God's presence.

Moses is here a picture of the Lord Jesus Who went to heaven. Because the Lord Jesus stays away for so long, in professing Christianity the thought of His return has been lost. The hope is gone. The fact that He is in heaven to commit Himself there for His people has no meaning whatsoever. The result is that Christians abuse each other and connect with the world, as the Lord Jesus suggests in a parable (Mt 24:48-49).

Through the people's proposal to Aaron to make a god, the people reject Moses. This is because now that they no longer have Moses in their midst, they have turned back to Egypt in their hearts. They reject Moses and his words. Has he not recently reminded them that they will not have any other gods besides the LORD, neither of silver nor of gold (Exo 20:23)? But they don't want to obey him.

In the same way, professing Christianity acts in relation to Christ. The voices to introduce tangible things into the experience of religion are becoming stronger and stronger. It is because one does not want to listen to Christ and His Word. Then people come up with such proposals.

Verses 2-6 | Aaron Makes the Golden Calf

2 Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring [them] to me." 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought [them] to Aaron. 4 He took [this] from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 5 Now when Aaron saw [this], he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow [shall be] a feast to the LORD." 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

The people are only too willing to supply materials for making a god they can see. For that they want to make sacrifices, it may cost something (Isa 46:6). The ear decorations are gladly handed in. The ear is stripped of what it adorns, and that is listening to God's Word.

Aaron gives it the shape of a calf and gives the calf the honor that only God is worthy of. He grants the calf the honor of redemption from Egypt. All God's miracles are forgotten. Psalm 106 gives an impressive account of this (Psa 106:19-23). Aaron builds another altar for it and even calls out a feast whereby he mentions the name of the LORD.

This is one of the events Paul quotes from the history of the people of Israel, of which he says that they "happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved" (1Cor 10:6). In the following verse he then cites this event with the golden calf: "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play"" (1Cor 10:7).

Paulus refers to the 'festivities' around the golden calf. The Israelites became idolaters. Idolatry means: to put something else in the place of God and of Christ. That can easily happen. It really does not have to be about things that we know are sinful, wrong things. We see that here. What is their idolatry? It is said directly behind it: eating and drinking and playing. Are these wrong activities? Not in themselves, but they are wrong for Israel.

The people have lost contact with Moses, their great leader. He has been gone for a long time, people don't see him anymore and don't hear him anymore. That's why they say to Aaron that he should make a god. Aaron does that and the golden calf arises on its pedestal. Then they start to eat, drink and play. So what is the cause of eating, drinking and playing? That Moses has been gone for so long.

What is the example for us here? The Lord Jesus has been gone for so long, it seems as if He never comes back. Then the thought creeps in: "Let's make it easy for ourselves in this world and live life as we like it. We'll make a god for ourselves too, one we like, one with whom we can get along, and life becomes one big party!" But it is a feast without the true God. These kinds of sounds can be heard around us with people who profess to be Christians, but who do not take into account the coming of Christ.

When the Christian no longer looks forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, he will focus on earthly things. Things other than the Lord Jesus take up his time and attention. The spiritual leaders take the lead. They do not want to lose their position and respond to what the people ask (2Tim 4:3).

The feast forms the pious sauce over the wicked fuss. In many shades, this practice is repeated in professing Christianity. Pagan holidays are covered with a Christian sauce (Christmas), wicked lifestyles are declared expressions of godly love (blessing of so-called same-sex marriages).

Verses 7-10 | God Speaks to Moses About the People

7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted [themselves]. 8 They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" 9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

While God still speaks to Moses about what concerns His heart, He sees how the people behave. It is as if He is addressing Moses about this when

He speaks to Him about “your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt”. God does not want anything to do with a people who behave like this. He asks Moses’ permission, as it were, to destroy them, and says to Moses that He will then make of him a great nation.

The way God speaks here shows how much He seeks to have a relationship with man. Every human being can understand this reaction from God. But this does not mean that God is equal to man. He does not speak from an impulse, but deliberately. The people deserve nothing but to be wiped out. What an ingratitude! What an insult to God, Who so manifested Himself in goodness and grace. It is also understandable that He wants to make of Moses a great nation. Moses knows Him and serves Him faithfully (Heb 3:2). It shows that God desires a people who know Him and serve Him faithfully.

God makes himself known here as Someone Who can be hurt, as Someone Who does not look on unmoved at everything that happens on earth. He shares with people what is going on with Him. In this case He does so to hear from Moses what He will do. The point is not that He doesn’t know what to do, or that He would lack the power to do what He wants. He involves Moses to bring out something of Himself in him.

Verses 11-14 | Moses Entreats for the People

11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil [intent] He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about [doing] harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit [it] forever.’” 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

“Moses entreated the LORD his God.” The LORD is his God. He knows Him. After all, he has been in conversation with Him for forty days, hasn’t

he? His reaction evokes deep admiration. Moses does not accept God's proposal. All self-interest is lacking. He does not repeat the words of God, but speaks to God about "Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt".

For his plea in favor of the people, Moses appeals to two things. The first appeal is to God's Name and fame among the Egyptians. By showing His power to Egypt, Israel has become His people. Secondly, he reminds God of the promises He made to the patriarchs. These promises are made unconditionally, independent of the faithfulness of man.

The outcome of Moses' plea is that the LORD reconsiders His intention to destroy His people. God wants to be entreated. He uses prayer, the intercession of His own, in the way He goes with His people and with each of His own. The first ground for prayer is also for us to remind God that He has redeemed us from the world. The second ground for our prayer is what He said in His Word. He always wants to be reminded of this by us. Not because He forgot, but to notice that we have not forgotten it, that we live by the promises of His Word.

Verses 15-20 | Moses' Anger Burns

15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one [side] and the other. 16 The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets. 17 Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp." 18 But he said,

*"It is not the sound of the cry of triumph,
Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat;
But the sound of singing I hear."*

19 It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and [the] dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. 20 He took the calf which they had made and burned [it] with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink [it].

Moses descends the mountain. He holds in his hand the two stone tablets with the commandments of God on them. Joshua hears the noise of the people. He believes it has to do with a struggle and a victory. But he is wrong. That is no shame for him. He is still young. Moses, the elderly, mature believer, who was in the presence of God, tells him that he does not hear a sound of war, but a sound of singing.

Young believers may misinterpret certain expressions of God's people through inexperience. They believe that in a service with a lot of fanfare spiritual struggle is being fought. What is really going on is a dance around the golden calf. Religion is practiced in such a way that the participants enjoy it most. The service is fully dressed and decorated to their own taste. The Name of the Lord is mentioned, but He has nothing to say. His Word is not enquired of, let alone listened to.

When Moses sees what the people are doing, his indignation is great. In great fury he throws the stone tablets out of his hands and shatters them. Even before God's law came into the camp, they had already trampled upon its first two commandments (Exo 20:3-4). God has not instructed him to break the tablets, but his action is a becoming reflection of what is in God's heart regarding the sin of the people.

On the stone tablets God has revealed Himself to His people. The people have made sure that the revelation of God's will is not necessary for them. The law is broken at the foot of the mountain, not at the top of the mountain. When the Lord Jesus comes, God makes Himself completely known, now not as a Lawgiver, but in love. But also this revelation is destroyed by the people. The Lord Jesus is rejected. Below, on earth, He is murdered by a people He wants to redeem.

Then Moses burns the golden calf. He deals with it in such a way that their idol can be mixed with water. Then he gives the people their homemade god to drink. He wants to bring them, as it were, to a deep inner awareness of the folly they have committed. If we have committed foolishness, the awareness of it must penetrate deep into our conscience. We are convinced of this by the Word of God, either that we read it ourselves or that someone comes to present it to us.

Verses 21-24 | Aaron Called to Account

21 Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought [such] great sin upon them?" 22 Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. 23 For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 24 I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave [it] to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

Moses calls Aaron to account. As a person Aaron is weak. He doesn't acknowledge his own fault. He blames the people as if he had been unable to do anything except what they asked. His arguments show what kind of man he is. He who represents the people before God has made himself their slave. And as for the calf, he says, he did not do anything about it either. He just threw the gold they gave him into the fire, and then the calf emerged. He forgot what he did (verse 4). The fact that he still lives despite his serious sin is because Moses also prayed for him (Deu 9:20).

How difficult it is to admit our guilt. Just like Aaron, and like Adam, we all too quickly place the responsibility for our wrong actions with others. And as far as our own share is concerned, we have our excuse ready too. We think that we have not been able to influence sin. It went as it did: "And out came this calf." So we did not do it ourselves, but the circumstances.

Verses 25-29 | The Levites Choose for the LORD

25 Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies— 26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, [come] to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. 27 He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man [of you] put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. 29 Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

On the mountain Moses was zealous for the people, and pleaded for them. Now he is with the sinful people, and full of zeal for the honor of the LORD. He sees the derailment of the people. The leader Aaron did not exercise the authority given to him by God, but was guided by the wishes of the people. Lawlessness leads to shamelessness, which in turn leads to derision by the enemies.

Moses makes an appeal asking who belongs to the LORD. The Levites choose for the LORD. He instructs them to judge evil on behalf of the LORD. Without regard to the person, the Levites must go through the camp with their sword and kill their brothers. Later, when Moses blesses the twelve tribes, he mentions this honorably (Deu 33:9).

Their work is not desirable, but it is necessary. The holiness of God requires that discipline be exercised in the church and that evil be judged in this way. This can only happen by people who have dedicated themselves to the Lord. The result is blessing.

Verses 30-34 | Moses Wants to Make Atonement

30 On the next day Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." 31 Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. 32 But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" 33 The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. 34 But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."

After the execution of the judgment, Moses once again proves his great love for the people. With the words "perhaps I can make atonement for your sin" he climbs up again to the LORD. His attachment to this people who have corrupted themselves in this way is impressive. He even talks about wanting to die instead of the people.

Moses, however, cannot die instead of the people; he cannot make atonement for them. Only the Lord Jesus, the perfect sinless Man, can do this.

Verse 35 | The Punishment for the People

35 Then the LORD smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

This is the summary of the judgment that has come on the people. The reason for this is that the people made the calf and Aaron helped them to do so. The fact that not all the people have perished, while all the people have sinned, is proof of the grace and mercy of God.

Exodus 33

Verses 1-6 | The People Must Depart

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' 2 I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 3 Go [up] to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way." 4 When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his ornaments. 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.'" 6 So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb [onward].

Through the intercession of Moses and the judgment exercised, God can still give Moses the order to bring the people to the promised land. That does not mean that God is pretending that nothing has happened. He will not go up in their midst Himself. He will send an angel as a guide. If He Himself came into their midst, it would mean the end of their existence. He would destroy them in His holiness.

The people are impressed by God's intention not to go up in their midst. They don't put on their ornaments. Then God speaks again of the obstinance of the people and that He would destroy them if He were in their midst only for a moment.

Had Moses then not pleaded for the people? Was then the evil not judged? Yes, but God also wants to see repentance in the people themselves. He commands that they put off their ornaments. It means the acknowledgment that there is no place for outward appearance. Then He withdraws as it were to deliberate. The outcome of these deliberations depends on what He sees in the people. This gives the people the time and opportunity to show that they truly want to humble themselves.

Verses 7-11 | The Tent Outside the Camp

7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. 8 And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. 9 Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. 11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

During this deliberation of God, Moses acts in the power of faith. God does not give Moses a command, but in the right judgment of the situation he takes a tent and pitches it outside the camp. In faith he gives it the name “tent of meeting”.

Moses knows the condition of the people and he knows the heart of God. God can no longer dwell in the camp. But He desires to dwell with His people. Faith gives Moses insight to meet this desire according to the demand of holiness that goes with it. If God can no longer dwell in the camp, a tent can be pitched outside the camp. And for all who have the same desire as God and Moses, the way to the tent of meeting is open.

God acknowledges that place by attaching to it the visible sign of His presence. When Moses goes to the tent, many look at him, but they do not go with him. It is the same today. Everyone who seeks the Lord goes out of the camp. By going out, Moses condemns the camp. Where the golden calf is served, the faithful cannot abide.

The same applies later on to the faithful Hebrews because of Israel’s rejection of the Lord Jesus. In the religious Jewish system that has cast out their Savior, they can no longer remain. They must leave the camp (Heb 13:13). It is the place of separation from evil. The camp is where there is great emphasis on outward things and a mediating priesthood is maintained,

but where there is no place for the Christ of the Scriptures. Where the characteristics of the camp are seen, the command today is to go out to Him.

This is the place where a special fellowship with God is experienced. Yet it is only a few who look for this place, while turning their backs on the camp. Joshua, a young man, is such a person. Later, he can be used by God in a special way.

Verses 12-17 | The LORD Must Go with Them

12 Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' 13 Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people." 14 And He said, "My presence shall go [with you], and I will give you rest." 15 Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go [with us], do not lead us up from here. 16 For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the [other] people who are upon the face of the earth?" 17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."

Moses again pleads for the people. There is never a better basis to plea for others than to take the place of separation from evil. This position places him in the presence of God and therefore gives him an even closer connection with the people. This is the result of separation sought to be faithful and where only the glory of God is the motive that leads to that separation.

Moses is not content that an angel will go with them. He wants the LORD to go with him. He appeals to what God has said to him: that He knows him by name and that he has found grace. These are two things with a special meaning:

1. the LORD has a personal relationship with Moses and
2. Moses acknowledges that that relationship is based on grace.

He approaches God on that basis. Moses does not only want to know the way that will lead him and the people to the promised land. He wants to

know God's way. He reminds God that it is about His people. Taking the place of separation is done personally, but you are only there in the right way if you have the whole people of God in your heart and bring them in intercession before God. Moses points God to His people. He asks God: "Do not lead us up from here." At the same time He appeals to God's grace. He asks Him to prove it by "Your going with us".

God answers that He will do what Moses has asked. He Himself will go with them and give rest to Moses. Where God is present, there is rest.

Verses 18-23 | A Place by the LORD

18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" 21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand [there] on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

Moses has not finished asking questions yet. He has assured himself of God's presence for the way he must go. There is rest. From that rest he now asks to see the glory of the LORD. This goes beyond asking for His way. Going the way of and with God is the way that gives sight of the glory of God. Seeing God's glory is also more than what he saw of God on Mount Sinai. There he saw the holiness of God.

God tells him that he will see His glory. Moses asks: "Show me Your glory!" The LORD answers that He will show all His goodness. God's goodness is His glory. He wants us to know Him by the glory of His grace, more than by the glory of His majesty. The prophet Hosea speaks of a time when the Israelites will "come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness" (Hos 3:5).

The special thing about the glory of God's goodness is its sovereignty. We see this sovereignty in that He will be gracious to whom He will be gra-

cious. He is the sovereign Owner of every human being and completely free to make distinctions in granting His grace. Nowhere do we read that He says "I will be angry with whom I will be angry", for His anger is always righteous and holy. Never does He predestine a man to judgment, for that man does that himself.

Paul quotes what God says of Himself to Moses here in response to those who accuse God of injustice. They find it unjust that He gives His grace to some, while righteously withholding that grace from others (Rom 9:15,18).

Yet Moses does not get to see the glory of the LORD in full, but only a part of it, and standing on the rock in the cleft of the rock. In the Old Testament, God's glory can only be seen in a limited way. At that time God cannot yet show what He showed in Christ later on. In Him God's righteousness and God's love have become fully visible. Christ can say: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9).

The rock is a picture of Christ (1Cor 10:4). Moses must stand on that basis to see God's glory. He has to disappear completely in it. Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15).

Moses can only see the glory of God if He has passed him by. We can only see the glory of God when He has gone His way. We also see that in Christ. We look back at an accomplished work on the cross where the full revelation of God as light and love has become visible.

Exodus 34

Verses 1-4 | The New Stone Tablets

1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. 2 So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. 3 No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain." 4 So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand.

The first pair of stone tablets were broken by man's unfaithfulness, but that does not change God's law. Moses has to cut out two new stone tablets and God writes exactly the same on them as He wrote on the first tablets. The basis of the relationship between God and His people remains the law. Yet there is a difference. The first stone tablets are cut out by God (Exo 32:16), while this second pair must be cut out by Moses. Another difference we read in Deuteronomy 10. God says there that this second pair must be put in the ark (Deu 10:2).

The first stone tablets represent Christ. He is killed when He has come to His people. The second stone tablets are a picture of the believers. God desires that they display Who Christ is. The believers are in Him, as are the tablets in the ark. Moses on the mountain is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who is busy forming His people in the image of Himself.

Verses 5-9 | The LORD Calls out His Name

5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. 6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will

by no means leave [the guilty] unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” 8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9 He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.”

The LORD has said to Moses in verse 2 that he must stand before Him on the top of the mountain. Now we see that the LORD in His condescending goodness comes down in a cloud, the dwelling place of his glory, and stands with Moses. Moses can only stand before the LORD because the LORD comes to him. It is the same with us. We can only stand before God because He came to us in Christ, Who is the “radiance of His glory” (Heb 1:3).

The LORD proclaims His Name. With this He proclaims Who and what He is. Here Moses sees His glory pass by, which he asked for in the previous chapter. The names of the LORD show that He is first compassionate, gracious, patient, and rich in lovingkindness and is faithful, and also forgives, after which it follows that He also acts righteously, and in truth. This order we also see in the Lord Jesus, Who is “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14) and of Whom it says that through Him “grace and truth” has come (Jn 1:17).

God can forgive on the basis of Who He is, and He will punish the guilty on that same basis. He can forgive because He has punished the Innocent for those who know they are guilty. Those who do not repent remain guilty before Him. The consequences of sin work on into the generations. That is not to say that anyone is lost for what another has done, for each is punished for his own sins (Eze 18:20a). But if, for example, the father is a thief, there is a good chance that he will teach his children the same wrong things. They imitate it.

This revelation of God’s glory leads Moses to ask again whether the LORD wants to go in the midst of the people. The remarkable reason is the obstinance of the people. That is precisely why Moses asks it. With this he indicates that the people will never reach the promised land by their own strength, but that the LORD will have to bring them there. He pleads with God for the people because He is God and not man (Hos 11:9b).

Verses 10-17 | The LORD Makes a Covenant

10 Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. 11 "Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 12 Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. 13 But [rather], you are to tear down their altars and smash their [sacred] pillars and cut down their Asherim 14 —for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— 15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons [also] to play the harlot with their gods. 17 You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

God promises that He will go with them. He makes a covenant with them. He ushers in the covenant with "behold", through which He puts emphasis on it. He wants His people to understand that He is making this covenant. The people must also realize that this covenant excludes any other covenant. They may in no way enter into a covenant with the inhabitants of the land who assert their rights to God's land. Any connection with people who claim God's land for themselves and thus deny God's rights, is a denial of the connection with God.

A connection with the inhabitants of the land will lead to God's people worshipping the gods of the land. And that is absolutely forbidden. That is why they must put an end to everything that is a reminder of false worship. Altars, sacred pillars and sacred stones, it all has to be smashed. God demands the worship of His people exclusively for Himself. He longs for the love of a people He has set free to make them His own people. He is an envious or jealous God. Not that He compares Himself to gods of gold and silver, wood and stone, but He does not want His people to get

involved with them and lead themselves to destruction. Rather He seeks their happiness.

Verses 18-27 | Repetition of Various Statutes

18 *"You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.* 19 *"The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep.* 20 *You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring from a donkey; and if you do not redeem [it], then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None shall appear before Me empty-handed.* 21 *"You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; [even] during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.* 22 *You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, [that is], the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year.* 23 *Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.* 24 *For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God.* 25 *"You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, nor is the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover to be left over until morning.* 26 *"You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."* 27 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."*

The repetition of various statutes shows that there has been no change in this either. Man's sin will never cause God to adjust His standards of holiness and righteousness. God's rights to the dedication of His people and to all their possessions are expressed in the three great feasts which the LORD once again expresses to His people.

The first feast is the Feast of unleavened bread, which is immediately linked to the Passover. This feast indicates that He wants to see a people who have removed the leaven – leaven is a picture of sin in all its forms – and who feed on good things. He wants their lives to be a feast for Him and for them.

This is linked to His right to “the first offspring from every womb”, with the extra accent that a firstborn must be redeemed. In the right to the firstborn He wants them to acknowledge His right to all that they possess. Then they shall not appear before Him with empty hearts. When they come to Him, they shall have something with them to sacrifice to Him as an expression of the rights He has over them and also as an expression of their gratitude that they may be His people. He has received right on us through the work of His Son, through which we have been redeemed from the power of sin.

He wants Israel to keep the sabbath as a day of rest. Then they can reflect especially on what He has said. He also wants them to come to His house three times a year with the best fruits of the land. They don’t have to worry about what they leave behind. He will take care of that.

The second feast, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, which is held seven weeks after the Passover, is the feast for the first fruits of the land. This feast is linked to the offering of the first sheaf of the harvest to the LORD. It is the first fruits of the harvest. “Christ” is risen as “first fruits” from the dead (1Cor 15:23a). In the resurrection He also connected with Himself all those whom He redeemed through His work on the cross. They are first fruits of a new creation (Jam 1:18).

The third great feast, the Feast of Booths, is the feast of the collection at the end of the year. Then the full harvest is brought in. It speaks of the renewal of all things in accordance with God’s plan. What already applies to Christ and His own will then be seen in all creation. Creation then delivers its full fruit for God, which is offered to Him by all who may be part of it.

By maintaining these statutes, they can express their love for Him. Love will want to obey Him and trust Him. He wants to see this with His people. This has to do with having an eye for the relationships that God has given and the respect for their tenderness. In natural terms, God shows this by prohibiting the boiling of a young goat in its mother’s milk. As unnatural as that is, so also is it unnatural not to give God what is His due with a longing heart.

Moses is commissioned to write this all down. What is written down is recorded as a reminder for the present generation and to pass on to the next

generation (Isa 30:8). God's concern is also for the future, that His own will always know what He wants. Through their sin with the golden calf, their understanding of what God has said has also been reduced. Sin always means that we have lost sight of God's thoughts or at least understand them less. Therefore, we must be reminded by the Word.

Verses 28-35 | The Shining Face of Moses

28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. 29 It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony [were] in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. 30 So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them [to do] everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, 35 the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

The first time Moses came from the mountain with the law of God with him, his face did not shine. Now that is the case. When God reveals Himself in grace and love, it has a reflection on everyone who is in fellowship with Him (cf. Acts 4:13b). Moses himself does not know that his face is shining. It's not something you're busy with yourself either. It is simply the result of fellowship with God. Those who live in fellowship with God do not think of themselves.

Instead of being attracted by the radiance of Moses, Aaron and the Israelites are afraid. Legal people are always frightened by grace. They are full of themselves and their own abilities or attempts to please God. Grace

persuades them that they are nothing. That is a message they do not want to hear.

Moses puts a veil over his face, so that the Israelites no longer see the reflection of God's glory (verses 33-35). The meaning of this is explained to us in 2 Corinthians 3 by Paul (2Cor 3:7-16). There Paul applies the veil that Moses puts over his face to the blindness that exists among all those who wish to place themselves under the law.

The law has had a certain glory, but that glory has disappeared because of the glory of Christ. Anyone who still wants to place themselves under the law is blind to the glory of Christ. Such a man has a veil over his heart. If anyone gets an eye for the glory of Christ, that veil is taken away.

Whoever has accepted the Lord Jesus in faith no longer has a veil when he 'reads Moses'. The phrase "when Moses is read" (2Cor 3:15) means "when the Old Testament books written by Moses are read". For anyone who has come to know Christ, this veil has been destroyed. That also applies to the whole people of Israel in the future. When they return to the Lord, the veil is removed. Then they will discover in the Old Testament that everything is written with the Lord Jesus in mind. That is the "discovery" of the two going to Emmaus and the disciples when the Lord Jesus opens their minds (Lk 24:26,44-46).

Therefore the believer can now look at the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face (2Cor 3:17-18). When the veil is gone, we are going to discover things in the Bible for which we have previously been blind. When our eyes have opened, we will enjoy the Old Testament because we read about the Lord Jesus in it. The Holy Spirit would like to tell us about Him on every page of the Bible. The Spirit Who has the Old Testament written down did so to introduce the Lord Jesus in it. The whole Old Testament breathes the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. That is the meaning of "the Lord now is the Spirit" (2Cor 3:17).

People have said after accepting the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord: "I have received another Bible." Of course they read the same Bible, but they started to read differently. The Holy Spirit, from the moment they have received the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins, has been given the

freedom to show them the glory of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. The veil has disappeared.

It is now possible to admire with open eyes the glory of the Lord, without even for a moment being afraid. That is an unprecedented privilege. The more we are busy with the Lord Jesus as the One Who is now glorified in heaven, the more it will radiate from us as well. It changes us, so that both God and people will see more and more of the Lord Jesus in us.

Exodus 35

Introduction

In this chapter, the description of the tabernacle begins again. This shows that the sin of man in Exodus 32-34 does not take away or even reduce the grace of God. In spite of all that man is and does, God fulfills His counsels. The people have shown how necessary it is that there is a way to God. The tabernacle now comes amidst a fallen people.

Verses 1-3 | The Sabbath Command

1 Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, "These are the things that the LORD has commanded [you] to do: 2 "For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy [day], a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day."

Moses has received in a visible and audible way all the will of the LORD for His dwelling place and His dwelling among His people. Now he has reached the point where he can communicate all this to the people. The author of the letter to the Hebrews points to the faithfulness of Moses in the house of God, the tabernacle (Heb 3:5-6). At the same time, the writer makes it clear that Christ far surpasses Moses in everything.

The writer indicates that Moses is a servant of God in His house and therefore part of that house. Moses' service consists of passing on to the people what God speaks to him about, and later also in, the tabernacle. The writer compares Moses to Christ. As for faithfulness, there is agreement between Christ and Moses. When it comes to the house of God, there is a clear difference between Christ and Moses. Moses is a servant, albeit an honored servant, in the house; but Christ is the Son over the house, which is also His house.

Before saying for the second time what the tabernacle should look like, Moses first speaks about the sabbath command. In this way, even before the tabernacle is written, the final goal of God's ways with His people is

presented. The sabbath is a picture of the millennial kingdom of peace, the period in which God's people will truly rest and God will live in peace with His people.

Verses 4-9 | The Contribution for the Tabernacle

4 Moses spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying, 5 'Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze, 6 and blue, purple and scarlet [material], fine linen, goats' [hair], 7 and rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins, and acacia wood, 8 and oil for lighting, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, 9 and onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

The contribution is on the one hand a commandment of the LORD, on the other hand He asks everyone to bring the contribution with a willing heart. Everyone born of God has the Lord Jesus as his life. By this he loves God. It is his joy to serve Him and obey His commandments. The commandments of God – that is not the law of the ten commandments, but all that is inherent in the new life, as it is perfectly visible in the Lord Jesus – are not burdensome for those who love Him (1Jn 5:3).

The description of the materials is the same as in Exodus 25 (Exo 25:4-7). This is not a pointless repetition. When God repeats something, it makes it even clearer how much importance He attaches to it and we realize the value it has for Him. He wants us to share in His feelings and in patience He provides everything we need. That also includes repetition.

The materials all speak of the Lord Jesus. Bringing them means telling God what we have found in the Lord Jesus. This is an act of the whole people. Everyone has his own contribution, but all contributions together are needed for the dwelling place of God. The dwelling place of God is established where His people honor Him. He is "enthroned upon the praises of Israel", His people (Psa 22:3b).

Verses 10-19 | The Parts to Be Made

10 'Let every skillful man among you come, and make all that the LORD has commanded: 11 the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its hooks and its

boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; 12 the ark and its poles, the mercy seat, and the curtain of the screen; 13 the table and its poles, and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 14 the lampstand also for the light and its utensils and its lamps and the oil for the light; 15 and the altar of incense and its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the doorway at the entrance of the tabernacle; 16 the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin and its stand; 17 the hangings of the court, its pillars and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; 18 the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court and their cords; 19 the woven garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.”

In this section, the parts of the tabernacle to be made all come to our attention. Just like the materials, the parts also speak of the Lord Jesus. In the parts everything takes shape and in the spiritual application we see an extension of the truths that are connected with the Lord Jesus and His work. There are parts that illuminate the Person of Christ from a certain side. Other parts represent truths resulting from His work on the cross. We also see here again how all contributions are necessary and complement each other. Everyone delivers what is necessary, so that the whole can come into being.

A remarkable addition is that the veil is “the curtain of the screen” (verse 12). What that means is written in Numbers 4: “When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it” (Num 4:5).

Verses 20-29 | The People Bring the Contribution

20 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel departed from Moses’ presence. 21 Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came [and] brought the LORD’s contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments. 22 Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came [and] brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so [did] every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD. 23 Every man, who had in his possession blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine linen and goats’ [hair] and rams’ skins dyed red and porpoise skins, brought them. 24 Every-

one who could make a contribution of silver and bronze brought the LORD's contribution; and every man who had in his possession acacia wood for any work of the service brought it. 25 All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, [in] blue and purple [and] scarlet [material] and [in] fine linen. 26 All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' [hair]. 27 The rulers brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting for the ephod and for the breastpiece; 28 and the spice and the oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. 29 The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring [material] for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD.

After Moses has addressed the people, they leave, but not as forgetful hearers. Men and women who have been touched in their hearts come back with their possessions to make them available for the construction. Men come with fabrics and metals and wood. Women bring what they have made with their own hands. All are animated by one desire: to meet the demand of the LORD. They share in what occupies His heart. It is all given to Him. What joy for Him!

Women participate fully in the work for the tabernacle. They have special qualities that men do not have. They also often have a better sense of what is appropriate for God's purpose. There was no one among the disciples who performed an act like Mary. She anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus (Jn 12:3). She also receives a special mention for this from Him (Mt 26:13). Women are also mentioned among the fellow workers in the gospel (Phil 4:2-3).

In Exodus 32 they brought their jewels to make the golden calf (Exo 32:3). They have lost that jewelry and unfortunately cannot offer it now. In the same way we have lost for the Lord's service what we have given to the world.

Verses 30-35 | Bezalel and Oholiab

30 Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 31 And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; 32 to make designs for working in gold and in

silver and in bronze, 33 and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. 34 He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. 35 He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple [and] in scarlet [material], and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs.

Bezalel and Oholiab are filled by the LORD with His Spirit and with wisdom, understanding and knowledge. In this way they can shape the materials that the people bring in a way that is pleasing to Him. He gives the creativity, but does not leave how to deal with it to man himself. What they design in their creativity must find its origin in the work of God's Spirit. It is not about whether it corresponds to the taste of man, but whether it corresponds to Who God is.

This is also the case later in the construction of the temple. Nothing is left to the imagination of Solomon either. David gave "gave to his son Solomon the plan of the porch [of the temple], its buildings, ... and the plan of all that he had in mind" (1Chr 28:11-12). The same applies to the local church. For the meeting of the church, the Lord has given clear directions that we cannot change or even ignore at our own discretion (1Cor 11:23a; 14:37).

Exodus 36

Introduction

In this and the following chapter, a second description of the tabernacle follows. This is given on the occasion of the actual construction of the tabernacle. God's Spirit does not suffice by placing a general remark that everything is made according to the precepts the LORD has given Moses.

The fact that all the details are mentioned again is not a useless repetition. It shows that no detail is unimportant. Every repetition is important. It underlines what has been said before and indicates its certainty (cf. Phil 3:1). As God has shown it on the mountain, so it is made, with those materials and in that form. Knowing that something has to happen, and also how it has to happen, is different from doing it and doing it as it was said. This new description shows that God forgets nothing of what is done for Him (Heb 6:10).

Verses 1-2 | Who Perform the Work

1 "Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded." 2 Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it.

Moses sets to work the men who have received wisdom from the LORD for this purpose. Their competence is reflected in the work they do. This adequacy is not from themselves, but from God. This also applies to us, as Paul says: "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as [coming] from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God" (2Cor 3:5). Moses is here a picture of the Lord Jesus. For the construction of the church, the house of God, the Lord Jesus has given gifts (Eph 4:11-12). These gifts go to work on His command.

Two things are important in every work for the Lord: adequacy and willingness. Someone can be competent for a work, but if he does not want to

use his gift, nothing happens. Sometimes someone must also be encouraged to perform his ministry: "Say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it"" (Col 4:17).

Anyone who does a work for the Lord will offer that work and its results to Him as a pleasant sacrifice to Him. That's how Paul saw his service in the gospel which he performed in the power "of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that [my] offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:15b-16).

Verses 3-7 | The People Bring Much More Than Enough

3 They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still [continued] bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. 4 And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing, 5 and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded [us] to perform." 6 So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." Thus the people were restrained from bringing [any more]. 7 For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it.

The whole people of God provide materials for the construction work. They do this "every morning". It is good to start the day by bringing our contributions to the construction of the house of God. With us this can happen by offering ourselves and what we have. We make ourselves available and ask the Lord how He wants to use us that day to promote His work. That can be by speaking to someone about the Lord Jesus as Savior. It can also be by going somewhere to encourage someone.

The people are so willing to give that too much is brought. We also see this attitude among the poor believers in Macedonia who are held up by Paul as an example to the Corinthians (2Cor 8:1-5). It is not an order or a commandment. On the contrary. We read from these believers in Macedo-

nia that they begged Paul to favor them to give, in their desire to share in a service performed for other saints. Service is not only 'serving with the Word' but also by deed.

Paul can testify of them that they have given as much as they could, yes, that they have given more than they could actually give. They came to this because to them giving was a favor. Giving is a privilege and not a duty. Anyone who sees this in this way is not clinging to his money. The Lord Jesus Himself said that you become happier in giving than in receiving (Acts 20:35). What the Macedonians gave even exceeded Paul's expectations.

What secret lies behind such generosity? This is the secret: "They first gave themselves to the Lord" (2Cor 8:5). Whoever first gives himself to the Lord in complete surrender, has no difficulty in giving away his earthly possessions. Whoever is full of the Lord trusts Him that He can provide all that is necessary, for "the earth is the LORD's, and all it contains" (Psa 24:1).

Are these examples of willingness – from Israel and the Macedonians – not embarrassing for us? By God's grace and by His Word and Spirit we may know so much more about Who He is than Israel; by His grace we have been brought into a much more intimate relationship with Him; we are as a church most intimately connected to the Lord Jesus; we may know that the church is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit – and what do we do with this knowledge? Does it lead us to make all our time, powers and resources available to the Lord Jesus?

The call to us is: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not [in] vain in the Lord" (1Cor 15:58). The Lord Jesus says: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Mt 9:37-38). Someone once said that too much has to be done by too few. That is more indicative of the current situation than the one we find here with Israel. It is to be hoped that today we will follow their example.

Then comes the statement that there is no need to give more. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2Cor 9:7). Giving is His nature. When we give, we act according to His nature. If He finds that enough has been given, He lets you know.

Voluntary gifts are also used for the construction of the temple. David praises the LORD that He has put this voluntariness in his heart and the heart of His people (1Chr 29:14).

Verses 8-13 | The Colored Curtains

8 All the skillful men among those who were performing the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet [material], with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman, Bezalel made them. 9 The length of each curtain was twenty-eight cubits and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains had the same measurements. 10 He joined five curtains to one another and [the other] five curtains he joined to one another. 11 He made loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; he did likewise on the edge of the curtain that was outermost in the second set. 12 He made fifty loops in the one curtain and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was in the second set; the loops were opposite each other. 13 He made fifty clasps of gold and joined the curtains to one another with the clasps, so the tabernacle was a unit.

In the description of the tabernacle that the LORD gives Moses in Exodus 25, the ark comes first, for it is most important to God. When constructing the tabernacle the building comes first. This means that the first spiritual lesson that the believer must learn is what the church is. A believer only comes to the knowledge of the truth when he learns to see that he is part of the church of the living God as the house of God, with the Lord Jesus as its center.

The church is “the pillar and support of the truth” (1Tim 3:15). When that is recognized, insight will come in the other parts of the tabernacle that are given in the following chapters and represent all kinds of aspects of God’s truth.

The colored curtains are called “the tabernacle”. It is as if this is the actual dwelling place of God, although that applies to the whole building. The colored curtains represent in a special way the multiple facets of the glory of the Lord Jesus, each color representing a certain aspect of His glory. In Him dwelt on earth and still dwells today in heaven all the fullness of Deity bodily (Col 1:19; 2:9) both when on earth and now still. And through

the church, “the dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22), “the manifold wisdom of God” is made known (Eph 3:10).

See also the comments on Exodus 26:1-6.

Verses 14-18 | The Curtains of Goats’ Hair

14 Then he made curtains of goats’ [hair] for a tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains in all. 15 The length of each curtain [was] thirty cubits and four cubits the width of each curtain; the eleven curtains had the same measurements. 16 He joined five curtains by themselves and [the other] six curtains by themselves. 17 Moreover, he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outermost in the [first] set, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain [that was outermost in] the second set. 18 He made fifty clasps of bronze to join the tent together so that it would be a unit.

The glory of Christ and its manifestation by the church is seen only by those who enter the sanctuary, which are the priests. The world doesn’t see anything of it. The curtain of goats’ hair is not seen either by the priest or by the people outside. But the priest knows it is there. The New Testament priest also knows the meaning of it. It speaks of the separation from the world. The truth of the separation from the world is also seen only by those who live in the presence of God.

See also the comments on Exodus 26:7-13.

Verse 19 | The Coverings

19 He made a covering for the tent of rams’ skins dyed red, and a covering of porpoise skins above.

The covering of goats’ hair is covered with a covering of rams’ skins dyed red. That covering was also not seen either by the priest inside or by the people outside. But here too the priest knows it is there and the New Testament priest knows its meaning. It has everything to do with dedication to God. It is the counterpart of the goats’ hair covering. Separation on the one hand must be followed by dedication to God on the other. They complement each other and are both necessary for the house of God to meet the goal, namely that God can dwell in it.

The covering of porpoise skins is visible to the people. It is not beautiful, but it is useful. It protects the tabernacle from heat and storm and rain. For the world, the dwelling place of God has nothing attractive. The world as led by satan is the instrument through which he tries everything to destroy God's building (cf. 1Cor 3:16-17). But God makes sure that the building He builds is protected from "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14), from every pernicious influence. Our responsibility is to keep sin in doctrine and life outside the church (and our own life!) or to remove it.

See also the comments on Exodus 26:14.

Verses 20-34 | The Boards and the Bars

20 Then he made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright. 21 Ten cubits [was] the length of each board and one and a half cubits the width of each board. 22 There [were] two tenons for each board, fitted to one another; thus he did for all the boards of the tabernacle. 23 He made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side; 24 and he made forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons and two sockets under another board for its two tenons. 25 Then for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards, 26 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board and two sockets under another board. 27 For the rear of the tabernacle, to the west, he made six boards. 28 He made two boards for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear. 29 They were double beneath, and together they were complete to its top to the first ring; thus he did with both of them for the two corners. 30 There were eight boards with their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets, two under every board. 31 Then he made bars of acacia wood, five for the boards of one side of the tabernacle, 32 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the rear [side] to the west. 33 He made the middle bar to pass through in the center of the boards from end to end. 34 He overlaid the boards with gold and made their rings of gold [as] holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

Each board is from the same material, they all have the same length and have the same foundation. Some boards have a special place: they are placed at the corners. All boards are held together by five bars, one of which is applied in a special way. These characteristics can be applied to

believers who are all members of the church without distinction. In this context we can think of the statement of the Lord Jesus: “For One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers” (Mt 23:8). The distinction between ‘clergy’ and ‘layman’ is alien to God’s Word.

However, there is a distinction in gifts: “To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph 4:7). Special gifts were also given by the Lord Jesus with a view to the building up of His church: “And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). Although this is not about the church as the house of God, but as the body of Christ, we can connect growth and building (cf. Eph 2:21). We should not confuse pictures, but we can see them as a complement to each other.

See also the comments on Exodus 26:15-30.

Verses 35-36 | The Veil and Its Four Pillars

35 *Moreover, he made the veil of blue and purple and scarlet [material], and fine twisted linen; he made it with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.*
 36 *He made four pillars of acacia for it, and overlaid them with gold, with their hooks of gold; and he cast four sockets of silver for them.*

A veil is hung between the holy place and the holy of holies. It is called “the second veil” in the letter to the Hebrews, behind which was “a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies” (Heb 9:3). The holy of holies is the very dwelling place of God, for the ark is there. The high priest may only enter it once a year and not without blood.

For us, the way in the sanctuary is open, as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews teaches us. We may even have boldness to enter. We read: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh” (Heb 10:19-20). This way has therefore been “inaugurated” for us by the Lord Jesus. To inaugurate means to put

something new into use. Christ entered the sanctuary first, as a Forerunner, on the basis of His blood.

On the basis of His blood we can now enter and do so “through the veil, that is, His flesh”. God Himself has shown that the way to Him is free by tearing the veil from top, that is from Him, to bottom (Mt 27:51). Through the flesh of Christ, that is His body, our sins have been done away, and the way into the sanctuary has been opened for us.

See also the comments on Exodus 26:31-33.

Verses 37-38 | The Screen and Its Five Pillars

37 He made a screen for the doorway of the tent, of blue and purple and scarlet [material], and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver; 38 and [he made] its five pillars with their hooks, and he overlaid their tops and their bands with gold; but their five sockets were of bronze.

A screen is also hung for the entrance to the holy place. Behind this is what the author of the letter to the Hebrews calls “a tabernacle ... the outer one” (Heb 9:2a), by which he means the first part of the tabernacle. He goes on to say of this: “In which [were] the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; this is called the holy place” (Heb 9:2b). In this part, priests are allowed to go there daily to do their service.

See also the comments on Exodus 26:36-37.

Exodus 37

Verses 1-9 | The Ark, the Mercy Seat and the Cherubim

1 Now Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; its length was two and a half cubits, and its width one and a half cubits, and its height one and a half cubits; 2 and he overlaid it with pure gold inside and out, and made a gold molding for it all around. 3 He cast four rings of gold for it on its four feet; even two rings on one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. 4 He made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. 5 He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry it. 6 He made a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. 7 He made two cherubim of gold; he made them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat; 8 one cherub at the one end and one cherub at the other end; he made the cherubim [of one piece] with the mercy seat at the two ends. 9 The cherubim had [their] wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward each other; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.

After the house is made, the furniture that will be placed in the house is made. First the ark is made, followed immediately by the mercy seat with the two cherubim. When the author of the letter to the Hebrews talks about the ark, he describes its glory by mentioning that it was “covered on all sides with gold” (Heb 9:4a). In that verse he mentions even more glorious things in connection with the ark, namely “a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded” (Heb 9:4b; Exo 16:33; Num 17:8-10). He also speaks of the cherubim as “the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat” (Heb 9:5).

The ark and the mercy seat and the cherubim speak of the glory of Christ and His work. By His work we can think of His work on the cross for reconciliation, in which all God’s holy demands are met, and of His work now in heaven for His people. The mercy seat has become for us “the throne of grace”, to which we may draw near with confidence, “that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

The ark, with the mercy seat upon it, is the only object in the holy of holies. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews calls the ark “the ark of the covenant” (Heb 9:4). With this he refers back to the ark as the meeting place between God and the people under the old covenant. His whole teaching in the letter is aimed at placing Christ at the center, the heart of the new covenant, in direct contrast to this center of the old covenant.

See also the comments on Exodus 25:10-22.

Verses 10-16 | The Table and Its Utensils

10 Then he made the table of acacia wood, two cubits long and a cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. 11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a gold molding for it all around. 12 He made a rim for it of a handbreadth all around, and made a gold molding for its rim all around. 13 He cast four gold rings for it and put the rings on the four corners that were on its four feet. 14 Close by the rim were the rings, the holders for the poles to carry the table. 15 He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold, to carry the table. 16 He made the utensils which were on the table, its dishes and its pans and its bowls and its jars, with which to pour out drink offerings, of pure gold.

After the ark follows the making of the table for the bread of Presence. The bread is not mentioned here. This puts the emphasis on what the table represents. A table speaks of fellowship. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, fellowship is possible with God and with each other.

The table is as high as the ark. This teaches us that our fellowship is at the level of the Person and the work of Christ. Our fellowship as believers of the church consists of Him. Through Him and His work we are connected to each other. He is the characteristic of our fellowship. For we are called by God “to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Cor 1:9).

See also the comments on Exodus 25:23-30.

Verses 17-24 | The Golden Lampstand and Its Utensils

17 Then he made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of hammered work, its base and its shaft; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers were [of one piece] with it. 18 There were six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand from the one side of it and three branches of the lampstand

from the other side of it; 19 three cups shaped like almond [blossoms], a bulb and a flower in one branch, and three cups shaped like almond [blossoms], a bulb and a flower in the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 20 In the lampstand [there were] four cups shaped like almond [blossoms], its bulbs and its flowers; 21 and a bulb was under the [first] pair of branches [coming] out of it, and a bulb under the [second] pair of branches [coming] out of it, and a bulb under the [third] pair of branches [coming] out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. 22 Their bulbs and their branches were [of one piece] with it; the whole of it [was] a single hammered work of pure gold. 23 He made its seven lamps with its snuffers and its trays of pure gold. 24 He made it and all its utensils from a talent of pure gold.

After the table that is made as the first object in the holy place, the lampstand is made. This indicates that our fellowship with God and Christ and with one another can only take place in the light: “But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1Jn 1:7). Just as cups are connected to the lampstand as fruit, so too is fruit connected to the walk in the light. Our walk in the light, “as children of Light” (Eph 5:8b), will produce the fruit of light: “For the fruit of Light [consists] in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:9).

See also the comments on Exodus 25:31-40.

Verses 25-28 | The Golden Altar of Incense

25 Then he made the altar of incense of acacia wood: a cubit long and a cubit wide, square, and two cubits high; its horns were [of one piece] with it. 26 He overlaid it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around, and its horns; and he made a gold molding for it all around. 27 He made two golden rings for it under its molding, on its two sides—on opposite sides—as holders for poles with which to carry it. 28 He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

The third object in the holy place is the golden altar of incense. It is remarkable that God’s Spirit leads the author of the letter to the Hebrews to say that this altar is in the holy of holies (Heb 9:3-4a). This indicates that the actual function of this altar belongs to the holy of holies.

The altar represents worship. Aaron can enter the sanctuary surrounded by the incense of this altar, because otherwise he will die: “He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on [the ark of] the testimony, otherwise he will die” (Lev 16:13). For us it means that we can go into the inner sanctuary to worship the Father for Who He is and for Who His Son is through the soothing aroma of Who Christ is for God.

See also the comments on Exodus 30:1-10.

Verse 29 | The Anointing Oil and the Incense

29 And he made the holy anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense of spices, the work of a perfumer.

To make the holy anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense of spices, special qualities are necessary, as are only present in a perfumer. In the perfumer we can see a picture of the Holy Spirit, Who is only able to give what is necessary to perform our service in the house of God, so that that service rises to God as a pure fragrant incense of spices.

The Lord Jesus is “anointed ... with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Throughout His life He was led by the Holy Spirit and all the powerful deeds He did spread a pleasant fragrance. All this a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma (Eph 5:2).

See also the comments on Exodus 30:22-38.

Exodus 38

Verses 1-7 | The Altar of Burnt Offering

1 Then he made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits wide, square, and three cubits high. 2 He made its horns on its four corners, its horns being [of one piece] with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. 3 He made all the utensils of the altar, the pails and the shovels and the basins, the flesh hooks and the firepans; he made all its utensils of bronze. 4 He made for the altar a grating of bronze network beneath, under its ledge, reaching halfway up. 5 He cast four rings on the four ends of the bronze grating [as] holders for the poles. 6 He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. 7 He inserted the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it. He made it hollow with planks.

After the actual building and the objects that go with it, the objects that are in front of the building are made. First the altar of burnt offering is made. To this altar are brought the sacrifices which the Israelite brings voluntarily to the LORD and also the sacrifices which he is obliged to bring in certain cases. The sacrificial service at this altar is discussed in detail in the next book, Leviticus.

This altar is the meeting place where God meets His people. The basis is the continual burnt offering that is offered upon it (Exo 29:38-45). In the letter to the Hebrews it is made clear that this altar and the sacrifice upon it have been fulfilled in Christ. Whoever still clings to this literal altar today has no part in the Christian fellowship (Heb 13:10).

See also the comments on Exodus 27:1-8.

Verse 8 | The Bronze Laver

8 Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

Here it is mentioned as a special feature that women gave the material for the laver in the form of their mirrors. The mirror, which they use to look at themselves and which caresses their pride, is handed in to make it the

laver. It has cost them something to give up this important utensil. Someone only does so if she would get something better in return. And this is the case here.

The laver represents the Word of God. The Word is also compared with a mirror (Jam 1:23-25). The women's mirror gives a complete image of who is looking into it, but is not a means to change what is wrong. The mirror of the Word of God also gives a complete image of who looks at himself in it, but it does give a means to change. Whoever sees himself as a sinner also reads how forgiveness and acceptance by God can take place.

Women on various occasions give an essential contribution to the work of God. They

1. serve the Lord with their goods (Lk 8:1-3);
2. sit at His feet (Lk 10:39);
3. anoint him (Lk 7:37-38; Jn 12:3);
4. are at the cross (Jn 19:25);
5. are at the tomb after His resurrection (Mt 28:1-6);
6. see Him first after His resurrection (Mt 28:7-9);
7. are His messengers (Mt 28:10; Jn 20:16-18);
8. are the first to accept the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16:13-15);
9. form, with others, the core of the church (Acts 1:14).

See also the comments on Exodus 30:17-21.

Verses 9-17 | The Hangings and Their Pillars

9 Then he made the court: for the south side the hangings of the court were of fine twisted linen, one hundred cubits; 10 their twenty pillars, and their twenty sockets, [made] of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands [were] of silver. 11 For the north side [there were] one hundred cubits; their twenty pillars and their twenty sockets [were] of bronze, the hooks of the pillars and their bands [were] of silver. 12 For the west side [there were] hangings of fifty cubits [with] their ten pillars and their ten sockets; the hooks of the pillars and their bands [were] of silver. 13 For the east side fifty cubits. 14 The hangings for the [one] side [of the gate were] fifteen cubits, [with] their three pillars and their three sockets, 15 and so for the other side. On both sides of the gate of the

court [were] hangings of fifteen cubits, [with] their three pillars and their three sockets. 16 All the hangings of the court all around [were] of fine twisted linen. 17 The sockets for the pillars [were] of bronze, the hooks of the pillars and their bands, of silver; and the overlaying of their tops, of silver, and all the pillars of the court were furnished with silver bands.

The building and the objects in front of it are surrounded on the south side, the north side, the west side and part of the east side by linen hangings held up by pillars. From the east side means that it is the side “where the sun rises”. The sun rises nowhere else but in the east. Mentioning this in this way can only mean that the attention is focused on the rising sun.

That reminds us of the Lord Jesus. Zachariah, in his song of praise, speaks of Him as “the Sunrise from on high” (Lk 1:78). In the future “the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple” (Mal 3:1) and “the sun of righteousness will rise” (Mal 4:2).

See also the comments on Exodus 27:9-15, 17-18.

Verses 18-19 | The Screen of the Gate

18 The screen of the gate of the court was the work of the weaver, of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen. And the length [was] twenty cubits and the height [was] five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court. 19 Their four pillars and their four sockets [were] of bronze; their hooks [were] of silver, and the overlaying of their tops and their bands [were] of silver.

The remaining part of the hangings on the east side is different from the rest. It is a screen in the gate of the court and is colored. Only through this gate someone can enter.

See also the comments on Exodus 27:16.

Verse 20 | The Bronze Pegs

20 All the pegs of the tabernacle and of the court all around [were] of bronze.

Pillars have their place in the tabernacle, but also tent pegs. Pillars are impressive, while tent pegs seem insignificant. However, both are needed. In the church are men like “James and Cephas and John, who were reputed

to be pillars” (Gal 2:9). However, there are also countless men and women whose names we do not know, but who are known to God. All are needed. Without pillars there can be no building; without pegs the pillars will not remain standing.

See also the comments on Exodus 27:19.

Verses 21-31 | The Costs of the Tabernacle

21 This is the number of the things for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were numbered according to the command of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 22 Now Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD had commanded Moses. 23 With him [was] Oholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a skillful workman and a weaver in blue and in purple and in scarlet [material], and fine linen. 24 All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the wave offering, was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 25 The silver of those of the congregation who were numbered was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; 26 a beka a head ([that is], half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for each one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men. 27 The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets of the veil; one hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. 28 Of the 1,775 [shekels], he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their tops and made bands for them. 29 The bronze of the wave offering was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. 30 With it he made the sockets to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and the bronze altar and its bronze grating, and all the utensils of the altar, 31 and the sockets of the court all around and the sockets of the gate of the court, and all the pegs of the tabernacle and all the pegs of the court all around.

Everything is counted. To God every sacrifice, every contribution to the tabernacle, His dwelling, is important. It will be a memorial for them before Him (Exo 30:16). We too must count whether everything is still there, or whether we are not deficient in certain truths, underexposing them, while emphasizing other truths disproportionately.

The gold of the tabernacle comes from the voluntary gifts. The silver comes from those that are numbered. That means that the amount of silver is the same for everyone, because each of the numbered people has to pay half a shekel (Exo 30:11-16).

The sockets of the sanctuary are made from this silver. That is, everyone is part of the house of God on the same basis. However different we may be, we all need the fundamental truths of Christ's reconciliation work. Only faith in that work makes us part of God's house, the church.

Exodus 39

Introduction

This chapter contains the expression “as the LORD commanded Moses” ten times. It emphasizes the importance of the priestly garments: exercising the priestly service of the Lord Jesus and the believers. It also leaves nothing to the imagination of man.

Verses 1-31 | The Priests’ Garments Made

1 Moreover, from the blue and purple and scarlet [material], they made finely woven garments for ministering in the holy place as well as the holy garments which were for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 2 He made the ephod of gold, [and] of blue and purple and scarlet [material], and fine twisted linen. 3 Then they hammered out gold sheets and cut [them] into threads to be woven in [with] the blue and the purple and the scarlet [material], and the fine linen, the work of a skillful workman. 4 They made attaching shoulder pieces for the ephod; it was attached at its two [upper] ends. 5 The skillfully woven band which was on it was like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold [and] of blue and purple and scarlet [material], and fine twisted linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 6 They made the onyx stones, set in gold filigree [settings]; they were engraved [like] the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. 7 And he placed them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, [as] memorial stones for the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 8 He made the breastpiece, the work of a skillful workman, like the workmanship of the ephod: of gold [and] of blue and purple and scarlet [material] and fine twisted linen. 9 It was square; they made the breastpiece folded double, a span long and a span wide when folded double. 10 And they mounted four rows of stones on it. The first row [was] a row of ruby, topaz, and emerald; 11 and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; 12 and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 13 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They were set in gold filigree [settings] when they were mounted. 14 The stones were corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were twelve, corresponding to their names, [engraved with] the engravings of a signet, each with its name for the twelve

tribes. 15 They made on the breastpiece chains like cords, of twisted cordage work in pure gold. 16 They made two gold filigree [settings] and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. 17 Then they put the two gold cords in the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. 18 They put the [other] two ends of the two cords on the two filigree [settings], and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of it. 19 They made two gold rings and placed [them] on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inner edge which was next to the ephod. 20 Furthermore, they made two gold rings and placed them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it, close to the place where it joined, above the woven band of the ephod. 21 They bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it would be on the woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece would not come loose from the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 22 Then he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue; 23 and the opening of the robe was [at the top] in the center, as the opening of a coat of mail, with a binding all around its opening, so that it would not be torn. 24 They made pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet [material and] twisted [linen] on the hem of the robe. 25 They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates all around on the hem of the robe, 26 alternating a bell and a pomegranate all around on the hem of the robe for the service, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 27 They made the tunics of finely woven linen for Aaron and his sons, 28 and the turban of fine linen, and the decorated caps of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twisted linen, 29 and the sash of fine twisted linen, and blue and purple and scarlet [material], the work of the weaver, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 30 They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and inscribed it like the engravings of a signet, "Holy to the LORD." 31 They fastened a blue cord to it, to fasten it on the turban above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

If we read this, we are impressed by how all the actions that are carried out to make this garment are described in great detail. It shows that God follows our achievements with interest. He is not only interested in the final result, but also in how the final result is achieved. He wants us to be engaged in the way He has indicated in His Word.

In verse 3 we read a detail that is not in Exodus 28: a golden thread that is woven in the ephod. This is a picture of Divine glory (gold) shining

through all the traits of the holy Manhood of the Lord Jesus. All truths concerning His person are interrelated. Nothing can be separated, although there may be distinction. For example, we see that He sleeps as Man on a boat because He is tired, while standing up a little later, and rebuking the wind and the sea as God (Mk 4:35-41).

See also the comments on Exodus 28:1-43.

Verses 32-43 | Moses Approves the Work

32 Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. 33 They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars and its sockets; 34 and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of porpoise skins, and the screening veil; 35 the ark of the testimony and its poles and the mercy seat; 36 the table, all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 37 the pure [gold] lampstand, with its arrangement of lamps and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; 38 and the gold altar, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the veil for the doorway of the tent; 39 the bronze altar and its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils, the laver and its stand; 40 the hangings for the court, its pillars and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords and its pegs and all the equipment for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; 41 the woven garments for ministering in the holy place and the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests. 42 So the sons of Israel did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses. 43 And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them.

In verse 43 we read the final conclusion: “And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them” (cf. Gen 2:1-3). Moses observes that everything was made according to the example shown to him on the mountain (Heb 8:5). The tabernacle has not yet been set up, but everything is ready. Thus the Lord Jesus looks at all our work in connection with the church, even if it is still hidden from the world, and blesses us to the degree of all our obedience.

Exodus 40

Verses 1-16 | How to Set up the Tabernacle

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 3 You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. 4 You shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps 5 Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the veil for the doorway to the tabernacle. 6 You shall set the altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 7 You shall set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it. 8 You shall set up the court all around and hang up the veil for the gateway of the court. 9 Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. 10 You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy. 11 You shall anoint the laver and its stand, and consecrate it. 12 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. 13 You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me. 14 You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them; 15 and you shall anoint them even as you have anointed their father, that they may minister as priests to Me; and their anointing will qualify them for a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations." 16 Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

The moment of its establishment heralds a new beginning: "The first day of the first month." The often-repeated use of anointing oil (verses 9-11,13,15) recalls our incessant need for the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, without Whom the nicest work is unacceptable to God. Only what emerges in our lives as the fruit of the Holy Spirit is valuable to God.

In verse 16 we read the starting point, which keeps coming back: to do everything as the LORD has commanded and not to act according to one's own insight.

Verses 17-33 | Moses Erects the Tabernacle

17 Now in the first month of the second year, on the first [day] of the month, the tabernacle was erected. 18 Moses erected the tabernacle and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and inserted its bars and erected its pillars. 19 He spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 20 Then he took the testimony and put [it] into the ark, and attached the poles to the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. 21 He brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up a veil for the screen, and screened off the ark of the testimony, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 22 Then he put the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil. 23 He set the arrangement of bread in order on it before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 24 Then he placed the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle. 25 He lighted the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 26 Then he placed the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the veil; 27 and he burned fragrant incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 28 Then he set up the veil for the doorway of the tabernacle. 29 He set the altar of burnt offering [before] the doorway of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 30 He placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing. 31 From it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. 32 When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 33 He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work.

The workers prepared everything, but Moses erects the house of God. Not only does he erect it, he also performs a service in it. Thus we see that when he has placed the table in the holy place, he also arranges the bread on it before the LORD. We see the same with the lampstand. When he has put it in its place, he lights the lamps before the LORD. And when he has put the golden altar in its place, he burns fragrant incense on it. After placing the altar of burnt offering he offers the burnt offering and the meal offering on it. When he has placed the laver, he puts water in it for washing, and then he and Aaron and his sons wash their hands and their feet.

Moses sets an example in everything as a servant in God's house (Heb 3:5), he ordains the service. He acts as a builder and also as a priest, among whom he is counted, although he is not appointed as such by the LORD (Psa 99:6). He is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who is also greater than Moses, for Christ is "Son over His house—whose house we are" (Heb 3:6).

We see in the example that Moses gives, also an example for us. It is not only important that we know what the house of God represents, that we can describe and know how to behave, but it is just as important that we also do our service in it. What we know we must also put into practice. Then when we teach others about the church it will also have value and be imitated.

Verses 34-38 | The Cloud Fills the Tabernacle

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; 37 but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. 38 For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

A mighty moment occurs, the goal of all previous work: God comes to dwell with His people. The cloud, the symbol of God's presence, takes possession of the tabernacle. What He later says to Ezekiel regarding the temple applies from now on to the tabernacle: "[This is] the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever" (Eze 43:7a). For the new temple this applies "forever". For the tabernacle this applies until the moment the ark is captured by the Philistines. Then it is "Ichabod", which means "the glory has departed" (1Sam 4:21-22). The glory returns when Solomon finishes building the temple (1Kgs 8:10-11). However, the glory disappears again from the temple because of the sin of the people (Eze 8:4; 9:3; 10:4,18; 11:23).

But when the Lord Jesus is born, in Him the glory of God appears again on earth to dwell among His people: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt

among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). However, this glory was rejected in the rejection of the Lord Jesus.

After His resurrection and ascension, the glory of God came to dwell again on earth in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He dwells in this time in the church as a whole (Eph 2:21-22; Acts 2:1-4) and in the body of the individual believer (1Cor 6:19).

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