

Free - Take One



Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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Step Into the Springs!

On April 18th of this year Living Springs marked its 25th anniversary. As we talked about how to celebrate that achievement, I found myself unable to really think about it. Obviously, one of the ways you mark such an occasion is to take time and reflect on all that has been done. In doing that we see a great mixture of accomplishment, disappointment, hard work, and, of course, change. I remember those early days of ministry struggling with the question of whether or not I should start a church. As I headed into doing it, there was the work of figuring out how to establish a nonprofit ministry without the backing of a denomination. I had known from pretty early on it would not be God's will for me to join a denomination, and I understood why. However, setting up and running your own organization comes with its challenges and extra work.

We did that work for one reason alone, to be free to serve The Lord in all the ways He asked us to without the pressure of others being able to affect what was taught and how we would conduct ourselves according to the righteousness God wants of us all. To say we have fought against the odds is an understatement! Right from the start, Living Springs was judged as too strict and old fashioned to survive in our modern world. To that, my constant response has been, we are not what we are because it is the style we have chosen to be but because we follow what we hear God telling us was/is right. I had to keep reminding people that if we thought being like all the bigger churches was correct, Living Springs would not exist! To me, the ministry has never been a competition. I preach and teach what I hear God telling me to say and let people do with it as they choose. We have known all along that the last days would be as it was in the days of Noah, and Noah only got on that ark with seven other people in the end!

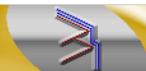
The story goes by rather fast when we simply read it in the Bible, and due to that it might be hard to grasp just how little 25 years is in comparison to Noah's 120 years of preparing for the flood. It's hard to think of all those years not just of hard work hammering away on the giant ark but all the conversations he must have had over and over about how useless it was for him to do it, how ridiculous he was being to think a flood like that was coming. How many nights did Noah go to bed and wonder, did I really understand what God told me or am I just losing my mind? All the mornings he woke up feeling the ache in his muscles from

the days of crawling, climbing, lifting, generally doing the physical labor and thinking, can I get up and keep doing this? Do I really have the strength to carry on? Just writing this and thinking about it literally brings so many tears to my eyes I have to stop and take time to recover.

Maybe that reaction all by itself is the answer to how one celebrates, or at least acknowledges the passing of what this world calls a milestone, because ministry is hard! The work is not just long, it's never ending. In a world so contrary to the things of God, the ridicule of what you do and how you do it is a constant presence, but therein lies the victory. For all the people who said Living Springs would never make it, for all question marks about how a church could turn to become a pure teaching ministry without the weekly backing of some church(es), for all the work that there just isn't enough hours in the day to get done, we never gave up! At the risk of sounding prideful, we can say as of this issue Living Springs has published 102 issues of Shaqah, and it literally goes into many countries around the world. I was told by a minister in Pakistan just the other day that he translates Shaqah to use in his sermons. A minister in Kenya told us our books have become the most beloved materials among the people they minister to! We get letters from so many in prison thanking us for being willing to send materials to them when they so often feel forgotten, and yes, from across the United States we hear encouragement from so many we have never met face to face, but who are thankful Living Springs does what it does.

To many what Living Springs does doesn't seem like much, but to those who are hungry, the materials God allows us to produce mean the world. This is what makes you shutdown the doubt and sleep at night, that cause the muscles to find strength in the morning to get up and continue in the work. YOU the readers of our materials are God's confirmation to us that marching on with God's will guiding us no matter how “out of step” with people in our day it might seem, was the right way to run this ministry for the last 25 years and beyond. We could be like Noah and only have the family that runs this ministry willing to care, but Living Springs has such a large family in all of you who share in the blessings God has rained down on this ministry, that after 25 years, seeing just our “family” making it to be with our Lord for eternity would be a tremendous reward!

P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539



(970) 593-9468



In our last segment, we talked about the fact we ended our look at the Torah and are now ready to start talking about the next grouping of books that comprise the Bible. In doing that, we get into the fact none of this is about teaching Dispensationalism or the like. We are simply talking about the point in time when the Law of God was fully in place, and that is why Deuteronomy ends the Torah. So was the giving of the Law a major transition in salvation? Not at all! It was stepping down a path toward God working His ultimate plan to save men who had chosen how they would use their free will to live by the time of its giving. Man's sin brought death upon us all as we lost access to the Tree of Life. Man's sin brought death upon us all as we suffered a worldwide flood. God would not wait so long to act the next time, and man's sin caused us to lose the advantage of a single language. However, God's grace gave us the Law! This is why it is the core of God's Word, and even though Jesus has come that remains true because it is the perspective from which we must see everything that remains in the Bible.

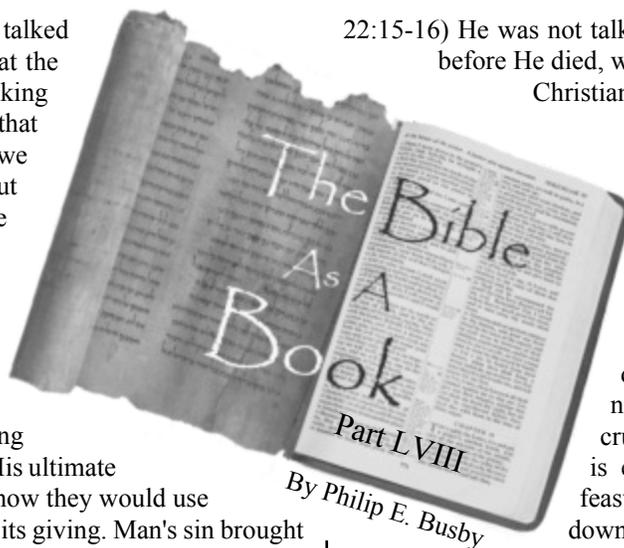
In many ways it simply does not matter what the grouping of other books are, aside from an organized way to see them and understand their point for being there. In a nutshell, the remainder of the Bible is the story of God's chosen nation living under the Law and showing us what that looks like. This brought about prophets, many of whose words were preserved for us because in setting Israel straight, or attempting to at least, they continually pointed to The Messiah Who would be the fulfillment of the Law. This is what the books are about which we call the New Testament, and over the years, since I do not favor the terms Old and New Testament, I have stated many times that I believe we should refer to the "Old Testament" as simply what it really is, and that's the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, I have greatly debated what a good name for what we call the "New Testament" should be, and I think what I just said is probably the key. Since everything in the Bible should be looked at from the perspective of the Torah, and the main point of the Torah is to point to the day when The Messiah would come, what we call the New Testament is probably best described as Books of The Messiah. Though I will admit with as many works as there are out there in this world, finding a term/title that is not already in use for something totally other than Holy Scripture is likely a difficult thing to do.

One of the problems I believe Christians have faced through the centuries is the fact they have been taught to look at Jesus' fulfilling the Law as meaning He somehow put an end to it, in spite of the fact that's exactly opposite of what Jesus said. (Matt. 5:17) Jesus also clearly demonstrates to us the fact He was not ending the practice of the Law by the Jews in what He said the night of what Christians call the Last Supper. This was a Passover Seder, in truth, held early because Jesus would be dying on the cross the next evening when it should have been held. However, this is why Jesus told His disciples that it was with desire that He desired to eat this meal with them. (Luke

22:15-16) He was not talking about just having one final meal before He died, which is the wrong prospective of why Christians call it the Last Supper. No, Jesus was referring to the fact He desired to eat this one last Passover with the disciples in spite of the fact they really were doing it a night too early. This was Him explaining why they went ahead and did it. We see this more clearly when we look at the simple fact the disciples were not prepared for the next events of Jesus being arrested and crucified. When we look at the story, it is easy without the perspective of the feasts to believe Jesus simply set the men down and said I want to have one final meal with all of us together before I go to the cross, but when we see it from the Jewish way of thinking, Jesus' statement is clearly about explaining why they were holding Passover the night before it normally would happen. This, in light of the fact they did not assume the worst was just around the corner that very night, means the disciples were still a bit confused about it, but they would understand it later with clarity, and so should we!

It is also during this meal we get the famous words Christians like to put on what they call communion tables in the front of their sanctuaries. There you will often see the words "...this do in remembrance of me." in reference to Jesus' words He spoke while breaking the bread and drinking the cup. This is the entire way in which Christians come up with the sacrament they call communion. They see Jesus setting some precedence of specifically breaking bread while using it to illustrate His body being broken, and then using the wine in the cup to illustrate His blood being shed; thus, when Jesus speaks those words about as oft as ye do this, it is easy for Christians to believe He created a ceremony which, at least once in a while, every good believer in Jesus should do. In truth, all Jesus was doing is exactly what should have been obvious, and I believe was to the disciples as the shock of all these events settled in their minds. They clearly understood (and from the perspective of the Torah so should we be able to) that Jesus spoke of the Passover meal which God has specifically commanded in the Law the people of the chosen nation were to observe. They were not to pick a random time to do it or its frequency. Passover is set on the calendar created by the Law, and it begins the cycle of the seven Biblical feasts God commanded. Jesus was clearly describing to them the fact they might have known when they sat down each year to eat this Passover meal that they represented God's plan for salvation. They certainly understood the historic meaning of Passover being the night they, as a nation, were set free from Egypt, but Jesus was telling them, these actions and events I am about to go through, are what it has always represented, and from now on in your minds they will always figure predominantly as Passover's meaning.

In all this, we see how much even the New Testament is not separated from the Torah and its precepts, but directly connected to it! Jesus was talking to Jewish men about a Jewish feast which God had given them in the Law. The misuse of this



Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we covered the conversation Abraham had with Abimelech the king of the Philistines. This was a diplomatic meeting in that the king had come wanting to make an agreement with Abraham about how they would interact as powers in the region. It seemed Abimelech understood not only that Abraham had God solidly on his side, but also that Abraham and his descendants were going to be around on this land for a very long time. Abimelech wanted to be sure that as Abraham's house grew, his intent would not be to do harm to the Philistines as a people. His excuse was that he felt he as the Philistine king had treated Abraham correctly, and he wanted Abraham to return that "kindness." Abraham accepted the agreement and then proceeded to point out an issue about a well of water Abimelech's people had not dealt fairly about because Abraham had dug the well and they had taken it away. This served as an example of how if one is going to make an agreement with a righteous man, you had better be prepared to step up the righteousness of your actions in return. Abraham gave gifts of animals to the king to make it clear he accepted the proposal, and gave specific animals as a symbol they had settled the ownership of the well as belonging to Abraham. The place this meeting was held would be named Beersheba, which means, "Well of the oath." This brought us through Genesis chapter 21 verse 31, and we are ready to start at verse 32 this time.

Verse 32 simply concludes the meeting Abraham and Abimelech had at Beersheba, confirming they had made a covenant together. The use of this word "covenant" of course tells us this was more than a loose pact or a promise. The agreement they had was also not just for this generation but was to be binding on future generations of the family. As talked about last time, agreements such as this one are not one-sided. This was not about Abraham agreeing to certain terms the king had laid out. This agreement was about both sides continuing to work together and do right by each other. This is the other significance of calling it a covenant. We also see that the king rose and both he and his military head left. With that, we move into verse 33. In this verse we see Abraham did not leave Beersheba. This was because this was his territory. Not that he claimed to own anything of the land but because it was where he chose to live. This emphasizes how much the king had come to Abraham, not the other way around, or that they met in a "neutral" location.

Next, we see here at Beersheba Abraham did a thing which many who read the Bible might wonder about. It says Abraham planted a grove! As one reads through most of the rest of the Bible we see a lot of groves being destroyed by God's people as well as God warning the groves in the land needed to be destroyed in the cases where they had not been. However, here we see Abraham, the great man of God, planting one and using it to call upon the Name of The Lord! This brings us to a perfect example of why false religion can be so confusing and we need to be careful to simply avoid religion as a way to live for God. As we step through the stories of Genesis, we clearly

see many practices as being worship to God that the Law God gave to Israel later forbids in their entirety. Christians who see the importance of studying the Law often find themselves asking, how much of this should I be following? However, that is not really a logical question. To be clear, I do not say that because of what the majority of Christianity believes and teaches, which is that the Law, after Christ, is something that was through and over with. No, that is totally untrue! The truth is we should understand how much the Law really is about restricting religious practices to the chosen nation and only to them!

Here is a good example. Abraham did not plant this grove because in any way God had told him to. He planted this grove because it was a way to honor and worship God; a way man chose. If we go back to creation we see God creates everything in what we, of course, would call a "natural state." Natural is the way we describe areas on the planet that have not been touched by men. Meaning they have not been guided by anything except letting nature take its course. In this, we often see greater beauty than we do in things man has put together because as some would put it, it's the way God intended it to be. While it is true, God intended the earth to take care of itself in many ways, God did not intend for the entire planet to remain natural. Now, before we all go crazy one direction or the other, about environmental problems man creates or the idea man has every right to do as he pleases, what I just said is not meant to speak to that. There are people who believe the right thing to do for the planet is for there to be as few a people touching anything as possible, but that is just as silly as those who believe man has free reign to do anything he wants with no regard to damaging the planet.

The truth of the matter is God told Adam humans would go out and subdue the planet and its life. (Gen. 1:28) With this, comes both the ability to make changes to the environment as well as a responsibility to care for it, not kill it! We see this demonstrated for us by God right off as it tells us after creating man, "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden;..." Genesis 2:8 Even God did not throw man into the wild natural environment. God did not simply designate a place man would call home base. No, God "planted," or in other words specifically designed from nature's elements a place that was obviously not "wild" in order to serve as a home base for man. As man fell into sin we see him being driven from this garden in order to keep us from the Tree of Life. (Gen. 3:22-24) This really put us on our own in the wild. It would be our job to make of the world what we decided to as much as it had been before the fall, but without the ability to go back to the place God originally changed to make a home for us. What this means is if we wanted to make a specific place to call home, we would have to build it. That is an easy enough concept for us to grasp, and as man went out into the world he found that, just as he felt the need for clothes, there was a need for a structure of some kind to live in. This is usually what one is talking about when they say "home."

However, by losing the Garden of Eden we did not just lose a place to call home because surely people would always have went out and designated other places as such, but what we really lost was that special place to meet with God. If, once again, man wanted a special or specific place to worship and call upon the Name of The Lord, he was going to have to put it together himself. Now, unlike making a home which is about a place to cook, sleep, keep one's belongings and so forth, a place of worship would be just about that, meeting with God, or even if one does not believe God comes anymore directly to this place than any other, it is truly as it is put here in verse 33; a place to call upon the Name of The Lord. This is strictly about the same kinds of things as fasting, which is depriving one's self of food for a time leaving more time and, hopefully, spiritual focus to hear God. Having a place to call upon the Name of The Lord is about having a place that is focused on doing just that. It is like fasting in that one deprives themselves of outside influences as much as they can, putting themselves in an environment most advantageous to speaking to God.

This, of course, could be done on a grand scale if we chose to, but a more intimate setting is more appropriate unless one is making this for a large group to gather together in. This is where we get the fact most people when thinking about a place of worship would think about something such as a grand cathedral or the like. We think about the idea of being in groups, even in order to worship God or specifically so we can, when in fact, that is not what the Bible really emphasizes. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying it is wrong, but again, it should not be the main way we worship God. If we look simply to what Jesus tells us, we see Him scolding about the idea of going into more of a public space to pray. Instead, He tells us the right thing to do is go into our closet and speak to God very privately. (Matt. 6:5-6) This has nothing to do with being embarrassed to show we talk to God, and there are times when worshiping in public and with other people will take place. However, the real work is done by going into one's closet where it is just you and God. This is the personal one-on-one kind of thought pattern that did not have to be corrected in man at the beginning. As God walked with Adam and Eve they understood how personal and individual a relationship with God was/is in spite of the fact God is everywhere! When we get to the story of Cain and Abel we see it again in the words of God to Cain after he gets downhearted with the way God reacted differently toward him and his brother's offerings. I will paraphrase severely here, but God tells Cain that if the kind of reaction he wants from his offering to God is the reaction his brother Abel got by bringing a blood sacrifice, then bringing a blood sacrifice is all Cain had to do! (Gen. 4:7)

If you don't see the words saying that, that's because of the mindset religion has driven into us. Many will even teach that in these early days before the Law of Moses somehow man was suppose to know bringing a blood sacrifice is what one needed to do, but we see absolutely no evidence God ever said such a thing! We just have to think in terms of religious worship instead of a private offering of what we have to God! If you have ever went to a traditional Christian church service I'm sure you are familiar with the practice of passing a plate, basket, bag, or something of the like for each person to put offerings of money in. From personal experience I will say that I did not favor that

practice. In the days when I was in charge of an actual church and its services, we put out an offering bag in the back of the sanctuary and left the responsibility to bring one's offering to the individual. Sure, as a matter of teaching it is good to remind people they need to give to the work of God, but again, we turn to what Jesus said. He told us that when we bring offerings of money to God we should be very secretive about that act in particular! Our own left-hand is not to know what the right-hand is doing. (Gen. 6:1-4) We see in this a great emphasis on how much bringing our gifts before God is so very personal!

It is never about doing it so we get credit from others or even feel like others appreciate us for doing, "our part." It should never be about feeling bad one person gave a great amount and we gave very little. When we give to God, we give to God. If we do it to get recognition then it is not an offering to God, it is done for one's self-gratification. This is also why the Bible speaks of a cheerful giver! (II Cor. 9:7) Bringing our offerings to God should be something we want to do not something we simply do out of obligation. When we look at tithe being paid in the days before the Law, we see that is how it was done pure and simple. (Gen. 14:17-20) Once the Law was in place, at least for those of the chosen nation, bringing tithe became a requirement. (Lev. 27:30) For all the things in the Law Christians like to argue have passed away and are no longer valid, tithing is NOT one of them! This is a sad truth as to how we want to use God's Law when it gives us what we want but teach it should not be followed when it causes us to do things we don't like. My point here is that when God says he wants a cheerful giver it is within the context of the Law's requirement. All of Israel was to bring their tithe whether they liked it or not, but what God wanted was for the tithe to be a joy to bring in that the nation would be blessed. Giving ten percent of all God had given was nothing more than a small token to acknowledge the fact God was the true giver, and it's something we should all want to do.

Before the Law, tithe simply was not given unless it was something a person wanted to do as an offering to God! In this, we see how the Law changed the way an item was talked about. It went from a thing people strictly chose to do, to a religious stipulation. At the same time, the whole reason the statement about a cheerful giver is made has everything to do with God speaking to the fact the real point was still about doing what one, before the Law, who brought tithe did it for, which is because they wanted to! That is what we are talking about here in this segment. Cain and Abel brought personal offerings to God. Like tithe would later represent, they brought out of the work of their hands. This is why Cain, as a farmer, brought plant material, and Abel, being a keeper of sheep, brought a lamb. Yet, in God telling Cain he could bring a blood sacrifice if he wished to get the reaction he craved, we clearly see there was no stipulation at the time, or intent on God's part to make men bring out of what they had developed by working with the natural elements. In this one story we see only the foreshadowing of what tithing is all about, as well as the sacrificing of animals. When God gave the Law He made it a commandment that those of the chosen nation bring what specifically is tithe as well as animal sacrifices, and more than most ever think about, plant-based offerings much like Cain brought!

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XXXII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

As we continue our look at the history of the chosen nation after Christ's ascension, we are focused on the struggles the Jews began to have with Rome. We ended our last segment by looking at one of the first real uprisings by the Jews against the Romans, and how it was not really as big in scale as it was in impact on the political circumstances. In many ways, this uprising was only a result of already bad tensions building among the Jews against the Romans, and that is what made it more important than just some minor uprisings like had happened at other times. This uprising started in 46 A.D. and climaxed in 48. This puts those events in the reign of the emperor who succeeded Caligula. That man would be Claudius, who came to power after Caligula's assassination in 41 A.D. Claudius came to power in spite of being unpopular with the people of the empire. However, there is an interesting note in the transition between these two emperors of Rome. As we covered last time, Caligula was a man who wasted a lot and angered many people in the way he handled his power. I mentioned as we looked at this point that if the people and the Senate had any thoughts of the empire still being a republic, it had to be clear by now it was no longer, not in the true sense of the word.

In spite of that, or maybe it is better to say because of that, or maybe a combination of both, there was an attempt made by the Senate after Caligula's assassination to restore the republic. This would have meant the end of an emperor who held power that went beyond those of an administrator. If one looks at how the constitutional republic of the United States is set up, you see that the president's office is actually suppose to be an equal branch of the government along with the Legislative (House of Representatives and Senate) and Judicial branches. This means the president has certain powers and is not just a puppet or administrator only of what the other branches tell him to do. However, the president's office is called the Executive office for a reason, and that is because the president is not suppose to make the laws. This is true other than his power to make certain executive orders to cover things until congress can look at a pressing issue. If the president follows the spirit of this, he will work mostly to administer the laws of the nation, not create them or ignore those that exist as he pleases. If he chooses to overstep his role, he could become a dictator, or emperor of sorts, as long as he had the backing.

This is the kind of fear most all setups of government have. There is almost no way for there to be a government without some singular person acting as the day by day executive of the laws of the land. Various systems, such as a prime minister system, try to keep the top person from becoming too powerful, but all governments show this is a difficult thing. In the days of the Roman Empire the line between executive and dictator had

already been crossed. Thus, what the Senate was attempting to do after Caligula died was a feat most have never achieved. So too, they would not, and a man named Claudius would become the next emperor of Rome. In truth, this man was unpopular with the people as well as many in the Senate, yet it seemed to be difficult to impossible to stop him. Claudius came to power and showed himself an able administrator in spite of all this. However, what was good and what was bad could be hard to say. One such example, important to our study, was his invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. If we look again at when the uprising of the Jews started, we see the uprising took place only three short years after Claudius' attempt to expand the Roman Empire!

What is important about this is both views when it comes to the Jews. When one looks at the history surrounding the events of Hanukkah during the Greek Empire, we see the Greeks were not a united people almost from the start. Internal as well as external conflict was an ever present pressure. When the Jews rose up to retake the temple, they not only did it against a ruler who had far overstepped his bounds in violating God's Law, but who also had many enemies to fight. While we never want to diminish the truth God could have given the Jews back the temple and their freedom at any time. We see that on a practical level the Maccabean revolt came under better circumstances. As the Jews began to rise against Rome, they were working against a power that was attempting to expand, not one that was dying or receding! On the other hand, there is the truth that this invasion by Rome of Britain was looked at by the Jews as a sign of how much Rome was not going to lift its hand on Israel any time soon! As Caligula had greatly upset the Jews, now it seemed there was a new ruler who showed he was not going to reverse course and be a giving ruler at all.

Claudius had taken the emperor's position against the will of the Senate and the people. Now he was invading even further territory to expand an empire so large it was hard to see how it could stretch itself any further. In looking at the fact the Jewish uprising we have been talking about reached a climax in 48 A.D., we understand it in no way outlasted this emperor who would rule until 54 A.D. While the Jewish uprising did not technically continue, the point we tried to focus on last time is that it did not totally come to an end either. We have to move forward in our study keeping in mind how much this uprising was not an isolated group of malcontents that once destroyed or disbanded simply disappear. No, this uprising represented those with the most zeal to be violent, taking the first steps in attempting all-out rebellion against Rome. Just because the fighting that was notably part of the uprising had come to an end, we must not think the feelings that brought on such an attempt were abolished!

War is almost always a dark time in any nation's history, and the Jews are no exception in this case. Unlike Hanukkah when a very united movement of Jews who said

enough is enough began to fight and see others come to their side, the events leading up to all-out war this time around are far from admirable! Last time we touched on the fact there were those known as Zealots among the Jews. These were Jews who believed independence for the Jewish nation was their right. They were almost always ready to take up arms against the ruling power and often got blamed for any skirmishes that took place in some form or another. Such was the case during the uprising we talked about in our last segment. However, as we discussed, it may be true Zealots are always ready to join a good fight and, in fact, push it forward, but they were not as much the reason the uprising took place. If they had of been it would not have meant as much as it did. If Zealots were constantly so violent as to not stop until the last man, the uprising would have gone on in full view until every remaining Zealot had been wiped out. This would never mean the end of the Zealots in that a new generation of those with the same feelings would surely have risen, but the point is, the group survived the uprising to fight another day, due to the fact they knew when to lay low.

The bottom line is, the uprising came about because everyday Jews were very angry about many things. Thus, what I'm getting at here is the fact Zealots, by themselves, rarely cause much trouble of any significance. There needs to be a catalyst beyond them to really get something meaningful going. In the case of the uprising it was the general population of the Jews, in particular those in Galilee. As we move forward understanding the general population remained upset, we see what a touchy situation existed. However, beyond that, there was a festering that brought about the predominance of a group on the opposite side of the Zealots from the common Jews, and this should come as no surprise. It is not clear exactly when the group came about, and no doubt it did not happen overnight, but there arose a group known as "Sicarii." These were people who in many ways made the Zealots look peaceful, and that was not a good thing!

Talking about this group's origin, I should note that some have speculated Judas Iscariot, yes the disciple who betrayed Jesus, belonged to this group. However, this is largely unfounded! It is highly unlikely that this group's beginnings go back that far, and if they did, it does not make much sense that such a group would wait so long to act. If they are passive enough to do no more than the Zealots did on average, what would define them as a separate group? All that being said, the kind of mind it took to become a member of this group probably is represented in Judas, which is the most likely reason there is speculation he was one. There is really only one of two things, if not a little of both, that motivated Judas to betray Jesus. Judas either came to believe Jesus was not The Messiah, or like the religious leaders, did not care if He was, due to the fact Jesus showed no sign of moving against Rome to set the Jews free, or he believed Jesus' arrest would spark Jesus to finally take the action of rising up against the authorities which people like Judas wanted to see happen.

We can easily believe that Judas went out and killed himself after seeing what really did happen to Jesus based on the remorse he felt for being a terrible person who would betray an innocent man. However, there is also the view he did so because the entire thought of what he really hoped would happen not only did not happen, Jesus was crucified on top of that! If Judas believed this would bring about Jesus rising up and taking

action, he probably believed at the same time that if Jesus did not, the governing authorities would be forced to let Jesus go on the basis there was nothing to convict Him on. Not only did that fail to be true, Jesus died with a plaque above His head stating the crime for which He was dying. That crime was that Jesus was The King of the Jews! For one who was hoping to spark an uprising that would result in the freedom the Jewish nation, the symbolism of the Jewish King being killed would show just how badly it all turned out.

No, Judas was not a Sicarii, but the number of Zealots and Zealot like-minded people most likely grew in the years after the uprising. This inevitably gave rise to a more radical faction, that was the Sicarii and their name, as well as what they did, is very interesting. As we have been talking about, the people of this group were not going to sit back and wait for the right moment, they were going to be proactive. One of the best known ways this was accomplished was by assassination. What made them more successful was that while they thought big picture, they did not believe the only way to accomplish that was through big actions. They would not target high level Roman leaders. They would not just target lower level Roman leaders or even just Romans in general. The Sicarii considered all Romans, along with all those they saw as Roman sympathizers, fair targets. This means they killed Jews right along with Romans. They would do this by carrying small daggers called "sicae," which they concealed in their cloaks. The Sicarii would come in among groups of people, mostly at public gatherings, to get close to their targets. They would step in, use their dagger to kill the person, hide the dagger back in their cloak, and simply vanish into the crowd. A totally public execution of those they felt were the problem with little to no capture risk on the assassins part. This was something neither the Roman government nor the Jewish leaders could stop; thus, it greatly spread fear among Romans, as well as Jews who might be seen as assisting the Romans in any way.

Now, if all this sounds a little like a story you've read in a book, you are exactly right, save one thing. The Sicarii were not just A cloak and dagger group, they might very well have been THE cloak and dagger group! Sicarii are very responsible for why such tactics came to be used and the term cloak and dagger came to be recognized as a term. It might surprise many to know the Jewish Sicarii predate the Hashishin, which were Islamic assassins, as well as the Japanese ninja by centuries! It, of course, should be obvious that their name even comes from the very weapon they favored. Sica comes from the root "secor," meaning "to slice," and that's why the dagger was called "sicae," which is the more specific way to refer to the knife itself rather than its action. Put a suffix with that and you get Sicarii which means, "dagger-man" or "dagger-wielder." This terminology lives on even to this day. In Latin America there are hitmen called "sicario." Later Latin uses the word "sicarius" as a term for murderer. Today a "sicario" is the term for an assassin paid a salary in Spain.

The Jewish Sicarii were a real threat to the entire population as they did not discriminate as to who they killed based on nationality. They had one goal and only one, drive all who were opposed to Jewish independence out of Jewish territory! The thinking to bring this about built all through the reign of Claudius who had what was to him more important

things to do than worry about Jews. Then right from the start Claudius put his focus on firming up his position. Claudius was the first emperor to be named emperor by a military branch and not the Senate. Thus, he spent a fair amount of his reign attempting to garner the favor of the Senate. In some ways this worked but in others it did not. Claudius would face many coup attempts, none of which appeared to arise due to some ignorant action on his part. These coups were a simple result of the disfavor of him coming to power in the first place, and they were often spearheaded by members of the Senate itself. This led to the execution of many senators and soldiers who followed them. In the end, it is said Claudius executed 35 senators and 300 knights for conspiracy against him.

Claudius' life would end in a not too surprising way. It is agreed upon by most scholars that he was assassinated by poison late in the year 54 A.D. Also like many other unpopular rulers he was likely worshiped as a grand figure much more after his death than he was at any time during his life. Claudius' great nephew Nero, who was by another husband the son of Claudius' wife and woman most likely responsible for Claudius' death, named Agrippina, would become the next emperor at the young age of sixteen. Claudius had adopted Nero as a son, which made the way for him to be emperor. Also there is the fact Nero, like Caligula, was a direct descendant of Augustus Caesar. This made his gaining of the position of emperor much easier than it had been for Claudius. His mother dominated most of his very first years in power, but he began to pull away and do things his own way. It is debated as to exactly why he did it, but he eventually executed his mother in 59 A.D. Actions such as these are the reason Nero is often characterized in history as a very cruel ruler. However, that too is a matter of some debate. No doubt he had his moments, but so too did most all emperors.

Thus, time would march on and the unrest would continue to grow among the Jews, who in spite of this seemed to get little if any attention from the emperor himself. Judea had become simply a province of Rome in the way many others were. To these later emperors the past "friendship" with the Jews which had brought them into the empire meant nothing special. Even the idea that they could be a troublesome people if not watched seemed to be a fact Rome paid little attention to. The task of keeping the peace was left to the local Roman governors who all by themselves seemed to handle things poorly in spite of knowing what was going on. Just as the religious leaders had become comfortable with the status quo enough to feel empowered to reach out and persecute Christians across the empire, so too the Romans were comfortable in their minds the Jews were not anything they couldn't handle. In truth, an all-out war between Rome and the Jews was just a bomb waiting for its fuse to be lit, and that happened in the year 66 A.D.

In the city of Caesarea, which is along the northern coast of Judea, certain Greeks had made it a habit to sacrifice birds just outside the Jews' synagogue. As we have discussed this was not the first tension between Jews and Greeks. In truth, by this time the Greeks doing things to provoke the Jews had become commonplace, and Rome paid little attention. As this sacrificing by the Greeks could have been done anywhere or even at a Greek temple, it was particularly upsetting, as well as foolish, for the Roman army stationed there to ignore the cries of the Jews that this practice be stopped! Because Rome had

become so complacent toward the Jews as a people, a clerk at the temple in Jerusalem chose to do something that just might get the attention of even the pagan religious mind. You see, on a regular basis there was prayer and sacrifice made for the emperor at the temple in Jerusalem. In a way this was a compromise to the idea in almost all places across the empire sacrifices to the emperor were offered. The difference here would be that at Jerusalem the sacrifice would be made with the idea Jews supported the emperor and lifted him up before their God. Ending such sacrifices was, of course, a great offense for any place in the empire to do, but for the Jews it was something that spoke for an entire nation of people spread across the empire. It sent a clear message to Rome that the Jews no longer considered the well-being and success of the emperor something they cared to worry about.

Also, as was the case at other times and in many places but in particular among the Jews who were not suppose to be just another part of the empire, taxation became a point of civil unrest. Protests broke out in Jerusalem. Also the work of the Sicarii was not going unnoticed, and this was as great a concern among many Jews as it was among non-Jewish citizens. Rome needed to act to change the circumstances and get things back to level, at the very least. Now, if Rome had turned a blind eye entirely it would have been bad enough, but instead they reacted very ignorantly, doing so with the heavy-handed attitude Jews simply needed to be taught who was in charge. The Roman governor, named Gessius Florus, sent Roman troops into the temple at Jerusalem to confiscate seventeen talents from its treasury. In a clear sign he believed he was teaching Jews a lesson, his excuse for doing so was that he was collecting what he called, "unpaid" taxes.

As if war had not in many ways already begun, this got the attention of many Jews, for once again, their temple was being threatened by a foreign power. Jews in Jerusalem were outraged, but in showing how much the general population was still not violent at the core, instead of breaking into all-out violence, the people began to openly mock the governor in public. People would pass around a basket to collect money for Florus, as if they were collecting money for a poor person. This, like ending the sacrifices for the emperor, showed how through the Jewish people were with living under Roman rule. As the work of the Sicarii killed both Roman and Jewish citizens and the numbers of those murdered rose, complaints began to arise that Rome was doing nothing to protect its citizens. Now the trouble of those upset with the Romans was on both sides, and as riots broke out the end of any real hope of peace came to an end. Roman troops would begin to move to restore order to Jerusalem, but the outraged population decided it was time to take further action than just yelling in the streets. They attacked the Roman garrison directly and killed most all the soldiers stationed in Jerusalem. The Herodian king Agrippa II and his sister, along with many other Roman officials fled the city.

As news of all these events spread, the rebellion quickly took hold in other cities and towns across Judea and the unrest continued to spread. The legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, would be next to make an attempt to get things back under control by sending troops to quell the rebellion in Jerusalem. As they advanced, the troops were attacked in the Jezreel Valley at Bezetha. This battle would go to the Romans, but they were not

able to advance and take the Temple Mount. At that point the Romans decided to fall back and wait for reinforcements. They would withdraw to the west of Jerusalem and head for the coast, but Jewish scouts would closely track them. As they neared the pass of Beth Horon, which the road they were taking goes through, they once again came under heavy attack from Jewish forces which pushed them on into the valley. They then were rushed by Jewish infantry, and as the Romans attempted to take up their formation they found the narrowness of the valley made that impractical. There was no "line" for the Romans to hold, and the army broke down. Gallus would leave behind most of his army to keep the Jews busy, and most all the equipment so he and a small piece of the army could escape to Antioch. Some 6,000 Roman soldiers were killed, many others wounded. The Jews would take advantage of the weapons and equipment they could gather from the dead soldiers as well as what Gallus had left behind.

Gallus would not live long after this, but this defeat would have repercussions on both sides. On the Jewish side it raised great hope that the day of Jewish independence had once again come! Simeon ben Gamliel, who was head of the Sanhedrin at the time, guided the formation of a Jewish provisional government at Jerusalem. A former High Priest, Ananus ben Ananus, was made one of the governing heads, and he began work of appointing others he felt would bring strength to the new government. This government would establish leaders and commanders of military forces from Edom in the South all the way to the Golan in the North. Other activities would also take place to begin making Judea once again Jewish. There was an attack on Jews by the Greeks of the city in Caesarea, which was the Roman capital of Judea. Jews responded by expelling Greeks from Judea, Galilee, and the Golan Heights. There would also begin to be bands of Jews going through the land removing Roman symbols and false gods from town after town. This maybe above all else was a sign the Jews considered Roman rule a thing of the past.

On the Roman side, this great defeat of a mighty Roman army finally woke up Emperor Nero and made the Roman government realize they needed to take what was in their minds nothing more than typical Jewish unrest, much more seriously! Nero was not deterred by the loss of so many Roman troops at the hands of the Jews, and he became determined to crush the rebellion no matter what the cost. Nero and the Senate would appoint Vespasian, a future emperor of Rome, with the task of bringing the Roman army to Judea. Vespasian would land on the shores of the North, in what most Bible students would recognize as Phoenicia, in 67 A.D. He would come along with two Roman legions. There he would be met by his son Titus, who was appointed second in command, and had come from Alexandria with yet another legion of the Roman military. A large Roman army to say the least, but they would also be backed up by the troops of King Agrippa II which had already joined up with Titus. With more than 60,000 soldiers at his command Vespasian would begin not by attempting to march to Jerusalem, but showing his ability as a commander worthy of respect he moved through Galilee in the North taking town after town. Many towns surrendered to this vast Roman army without much or any of a

fight. Others offered the resistance they were able to muster, but they sadly fell one by one back under Roman control.

The two strongest cities in the North were Gamla and Yodfat. Gamla was a city in the Golan Heights and was the home of the historian Josephus Flavius. Gamla is believed to have been formed originally as a fort during the Greek rule. To start out Gamla was sympathetic to Romans, but as various locals and those of other towns gathered here during this time, it became a stronghold of the Jewish revolt. In a move of defiance this city would mint its own coins with the inscription, "For the redeemed of Jerusalem the Holy." Long before the arrival of Vespasian and his troops, Agrippa II had organized a siege against this city. The city would hold out for seven months, but when Vespasian arrived with his massive army it would become a siege that simply could not be outlasted.

Times were bad as the city had already taken in such a great number of refugees from the surrounding area there was not enough places for them all to live, and even the synagogue was used for housing eventually. The Romans' first attempt to build a ramp and enter the city failed, but on their second attempt they breached the city walls and began to fight the Jews inside. Preferring to defend themselves from the rooftop rather than all of them going hand to hand in the narrow streets, the Romans would find their weight too much for the roofs and many would die as the roofs collapsed beneath them. The Romans would retreat, but re-enter the city a few days later when they would beat back the Jewish resistance and finally take the city. Most all the estimated three to four thousand inhabitants of the city were either slaughtered by the fighting, or they were trampled or fell trying to escape down the steep slope on the city's north side.

Yodfat was a city in lower Galilee, and it too was sieged by Vespasian's army. For its time Yodfat was a large city of almost 13 acres. Here the Romans met strong Jewish resistance, but after 47 days the city fell to the Romans. According to Josephus 40,000 were killed, and another 1,200 women and children were enslaved. It is said a few dozen surviving fighters committed suicide in the end, and at this time Josephus was taken captive by the Romans. The Jews of the North had hoped Jews and other friends would come from Babylon to assist them. They also held hope Parthia might take the opportunity to intervene and fight the Romans, but none of this happened and both Gamla and Yodfat fell to Roman rule. With the cities of the North in hand and no outside forces in sight, by 68 A.D. Vespasian could feel secure he would not be attacked from his backside as he moved south. Vespasian would set up his headquarters in Caesarea, and again, instead of marching to Jerusalem he would begin destroying the resistance along the Mediterranean coast.

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

In all this we clearly see how the Law's stipulations came out of interactions between man and God long before the Law was given, because men did these things as a way to worship God! In many ways the Law simply honed down what God specifically wants to use as symbolism, and how He wanted it done so that the symbolism came out right. God also entrusted all this to be done by a specific nation in a specific place. This too was about making sure the symbolism came out right! Why do I keep talking about symbolism? Because we also see this fact about getting it right in the truth God wanted Israel to rid the promised land of all the other altars, groves, idols, etc. that were not part of what God instructed Israel to have. This part about what God instructed is very important because for the chosen nation God was restricting their freedom to choose how they would worship even God by making a specific place, altar, etc. for all of Israel to use. Thus, here we are at yet another key point in understanding, and for that let's look specifically at animal sacrifice.

When it comes to sacrifices of animals we see there is a significant change with the Law than it was when God talked to Cain about it, or from when we see men like Abraham do it. This is connected to why I said the debate of how much of the Law one is required to follow as a believer in God is illogical. From the Law it should be perfectly clear sacrifices can only be performed in a very specific place, in a very specific way, and only by the hands of very specific people! What this simply means is that when it came to the animal sacrifices prescribed in the Law, non-Jews could/can not perform them period! This makes it clear non-Jewish believers in God should not sacrifice animals. Again, this is not something we see clearly because so many Christians have been taught to think the sacrifices were to end with Jesus, but that is untrue! Jesus never said that. The Law makes it clear the stipulations in the Law were given to the Jews as a continual thing, not as something lasting until God changed it! (Ex. 12:14, 29:42, 30:8-31:16, Lev. 7:36, 16:34, 24:8) Further, if we look at what Jesus did say on the matter, we find He was very clear on the fact He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it! (Matt. 5:17-20) The specific fulfill part we will get back to here in a bit.

However, animal sacrifice serves to show us, as much as God was choosing what He wanted to use out of the interactions man had with Him as a way to create a symbolic religious law, so too, there is what He did not use. What was not chosen out of those things man did in the past were not good in the first place and/or corrupted to the point they no longer had usefulness. Since those outside the Jewish nation were not to even do many of the Law's religious practices the Jews were commanded to do without becoming part of the nation to as much a degree as is possible for a non-blood Jewish person, it's pretty clear many of those practices God did choose to use were not to be practiced by non-Jews any longer.

As we covered to begin all this, men started out learning about such things. In the story of Cain and Abel we see men learning blood offerings are treated differently than plant-based ones. However, what many do not see in that story, but we need to see, is exactly why God would one day come down to

restrict religious practices! We clearly see the ideas of why God told us to pray in secret and give our tithe totally in secret. How can it be emphasized more than in the story of the first two brothers who ever walked the earth bringing their offerings to God? The one brother killed the other one simply because God reacted differently to one than He did the other! Right from the start when men came to worship God together, we find it resulting in the first murder. It's like something you could put on a bumper sticker - "religion kills!" Iron sharpens iron, and Paul speaks about not forsaking to gather together in reference to getting with others of like precious faith, but there it is. (Prov. 27:17, Heb. 10:25, I Pet. 1:1) Stipulation one for this working is the parts of, "like" and "precious." Cain and Abel did not have like precious faith. The walk we have with God must be something the others we are around want to have as well. Now, I'm not trying to scare the church out of people, but please let us begin to understand how much it can and should not be the emphatic thing we push for like so many Christians think!

We should study the Law but not so we can follow it in a religious way, in spite of the fact the Jews were asked to follow it in a religious way. We might ask, why would God want an entire nation to do something He has specific reasons to tell the rest of the world to avoid? The answer is, at least partly, in the question itself. Only one specific nation would be doing it! This brings us again to the point about symbolism and getting it correct. There was hope one people could do it right, but even they, more often than not, failed. In that, we see just how much it would be foolish to ask all believers to do it. At least with the chosen nation we can specifically observe them being corrected, or circumstances coming about that prevented them from doing these religious activities when they could not or would not do it right. How would we see that in the world at large if the religious practice was to be done by all? Now, as to the other point in the question, which is God asked a nation of people to do something that could cause such potential harm He forbid it to the rest of the world. This is simply answered by saying God asks all of us to give in some way. Might it be a very hard task God has given you? Yes it very well might be, and that was the case with the chosen nation. We should simply understand this kind of truth is exactly why Paul speaks to all believers of even our bodies being presented as a living sacrifice to God! (Rom. 12:1)

The chosen nation takes on the dangerous task of stepping out religious practices because God said so. Now, there is a statement I would imagine not many Christians have heard said, especially in the context we are talking about, which is that they would still be doing it if God allowed them the temple. As we touched on before, most Christians teach the Law and its stipulations, or at least the ones they don't like, have passed away. Sadly, they do not do this in the understanding of religion kills but with the idea there is a "new" way! I just wish there was a way to convey more solidly how ignorant that is because man's "new" way excuse about Jesus ending things like the sacrifices is just a way of returning to a very old way! If God had wanted us to worship Him in a religious way following the kind of practices man simply comes up with on his own, He likely would never have given the Law! At the very least, He would not have committed it to one specific people. The idea Jesus somehow took away any part of the Law from the nation is not

forward thinking – it is backward thinking! It is an excuse for man to take religion back into his own hands, which, more often than not, is done so man can make the rules as he pleases. We see it from the start, and we still see it today!

So where does that put us? How do we worship God without religion? The answer is we totally do and we do not. This is why people find it confusing, so let's put it together. The ways in which we do not go without religion is in the fact God gave the Law. For non-Jews this is not so they would follow it but so we could afford to give up religion. We are totally free from arduous practices other than God's expectation we open His Word and study the Law God gave Israel in order to allow it to guide our thoughts as we live our personal lives before God. The Law is like seeing something on display behind glass which is there for all to enjoy and learn from. For those who covet having religion, the fact they try to take it for themselves and remake it in the way they desire is like breaking that glass and stealing it! It really is that simple because non-Jews, as well as in the personal walk of even Jews, serving God is not about religion. For many people this seems scary, even dangerous, and this is why so many try to break the glass and steal the Law as opposed to studying its intricacies. However, we have covered the main points to show how dangerous religion is, and we could cover many, many more by seeing how even Israel got themselves in trouble with it. We need to understand, so many of those times we think Israel was getting in trouble because they failed to be perfect, we actually miss the fact God was, in truth, upset about their attempt to break the glass!

For example, one day King Saul wanted so badly to sacrifice, not to a false god in any way, but to The One True God. This he wanted before he went out onto the battlefield to risk his life and the lives' of his men. He waited for Samuel to come and perform the sacrifice, but when Samuel seemingly did not show up in time, Saul decided to break the glass. Saul decided it was better for him to perform the sacrifice (in spite of knowing Samuel was the one who should) than it was to go to battle without having it performed. The other point is that Saul was impatient and missed the fact there might have been a specific reason God wanted him to delay the battle. The bottom line is that Saul was wrong! When Samuel gets there and finds Saul had done this thing, he gives these simple words to live by, "...to obey is better than sacrifice,..." I Samuel 15:22 We serve God in a non-religious way not because we think it is the best way or because we never panic and think we must not go without it, but because that is what the Bible shows us is right!

As already pointed out, that fact is clearly in the words of Jesus Himself. So many of the excuses we make as to why we as "Christians" do what we do are not anti-Old Testament in spite of that often being the idea touted. In truth, they are anti-christ! We go specifically against the words of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is, or should be, enough to bring tears to our eyes! People often wonder why I am so, oh so hard on Christianity, but there it is. I John 4:3 talks about the spirit of anti-christ already being at work due to people denying Christ had come in the flesh. That was close to two millennia ago. If today we can see past the cover false teachers use, which is that anti-christ is

a specific individual, we can see clearly how by now we live in, around, and many follow a full blown spirit of anti-christ like John was speaking of! We insist on breaking the glass and creating what we think is best, but once it is moved from where God put it, it is changed. That's why God put the Law's practices where He did, and will not even let the chosen nation perform it in live action if they can't do it completely in that place and do it right. If we break the glass at all, we affect what we were meant to see, and in doing so the things the Law was meant to show us. We corrupt it, and instead of teaching about true salvation through Jesus Christ, it teaches us a path that leads away from Christ. What other definition for anti-christ do we need?

Abraham labored to plant a grove to call upon the Name of The Lord because that would create a place where he could specifically come and separate himself from everything not dedicated to that purpose, and worship God. He attempted to prepare a sanctuary, pure and as holy as it could be. However, far more often than not, as men went on through time doing such a thing, they did it not to worship The One True God but a false god. Groves became not a place where people who found them said, yes here is a place to worship The One True God and anyone else who comes here will assume the same. It wasn't the thought if others do come they will likely be of like precious faith and that is what worshiping together is about. No, groves came to mean something worse than even a specific temple dedicated to a specific false deity or pantheon of false gods. They became a place where anyone who came would say, here is a place where one may call upon whatever god they might believe in to have mercy on their souls. Now that is anti-christ!

So what do we follow? The answer to that is in the idea so many Christians think so wrongly about – Jesus fulfilled the Law! The Gospel, the Good News, is simply that! We could go into so many things, such as what Christians often call the Last Supper turning into the anti-christ sacrament call communion, when in truth the "Last Supper" was a Passover Seder. Not knowing that is how we end up not seeing what Jesus meant when He said, "...this do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19 In so many ways following the Law the Jews had already been following for centuries was not about doing the action, but about seeing the truth Jesus was/is The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8) Abraham planting a grove was a way for him to worship God, but he did it because he already was a man who obeyed more than sacrifice, and he strove in everything he did to live righteously! Is that not what Jesus simply asks of us? To walk as He walked? In spite of the Law, is that not what God told His chosen nation, and us through the prophet Micah when He said, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8 So, study the Law and let it shape the ways you go about your everyday as you strive to live for and, as much as possible, like Jesus, but don't touch the glass!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

Passover event by the religion of Christianity shows us clearly how important it is to see it from that same perspective. If the Torah and all it has to say was still important to the apostles' understanding of what The Messiah was doing, and something The Messiah Himself referred to as being a continual remembrance of what He did, the books between the Torah and the Books of The Messiah are, in truth, all about seeing how that dynamic works. As mentioned, the books of the Hebrew Bible beyond the Torah are a way of showing us the organic way in which the Law shaped the chosen nation the Law had been given to. This was shown to some degree in the Torah as we watch the nation go about traveling with the tabernacle and the Law having been given, but those days were more of what we might call a crash course in the Law to get things started in the first place. That thought should give us a bit more of a perspective as to why during that time we see God being so "hard" on the nation. It is clear that when wrong actions were taken at the time of Moses leading the nation to the promised land that God's reaction is much more swift and severe than it would seem it was/is later. The entire Hebrew Bible is looked at in this way by some. So much so that there are those who say The God of the Old Testament is not the same God as that of the New. In truth, there is an entire religious philosophy that is totally based on that thought, but that is a misconception, to say the least.

If we look at most of the incidences many would point to as the things they based their thoughts on about God being so harsh, we see they come not from the bulk of the books after the Torah, but mostly the Torah, and specifically during the time of traveling from Egypt to the promised land. If we think about that, we should consider God had the nation in its very beginning stages of making them into a true culture based on the Law. God had to make it clear right from the start this was something He was serious about. If they did this, how it would be done was not up for debate, and that fact is something the people seem to understand right off as they stood at Mount Sinai hearing God's audible voice coming from the thunder, lighting, and smoke on the mountain. At that time they simply wanted Moses to go deal with it and find out what God wanted. If Moses would do this they simply would follow whatever He told them God said. (Ex. 20:18-21) This point has a lot to do with why we call it, "The Law of Moses," and find that so easy to do, but it was not Moses' Law; it was/is God's Law! The people were bound by it due to the fact they wanted Moses to be the one to hear God's voice lay this all out and not do it for themselves. If they were this afraid to deal with God as individuals standing before Him, they should have been just as fearful to speak against the man they had chosen to set in between them and God. In truth, this whole arrangement speaks of The Messiah, in that the Law itself would put the High Priest in between the people and the Mercy Seat where God's presence was to dwell on this earth in a very physical way. That piece of the Law demonstrates the true position The Messiah was/is to have. However, while He is worthy, He will only take it in the same way Moses got it. We as people have to want to put Him there for/in our lives. It will not be forced upon us by any Law!

Now, the main reason God said Israel had spoken well about wanting Moses, has everything to do with the fact the people were likely not to live their lives day by day in the kind of purity it would take to stand so close in the presence of God.

Lack of perfection in handling the knowledge of good and evil is what got us separated from such a direct physical walk in the beginning. All that being true, what we still see is as the nation traveled with the tabernacle in the dead center of their camp, they as a people were still living very close to the presence of God in spite of this arrangement of having Moses, and even by then a High Priest. This closeness combined with what one could call a steep learning curve to learn the ways the Law asked them to live, caused what we see as such severe and swift reactions by God to the sins of the people. Now, before one goes and begins to feel too sorry for those who did wrong, understand that the nation was not a prison. People who did not want to follow and do right could simply have walked away, and how many individuals may have done exactly that is hard to say. Thus, what we see in those who were rebellious enough to bring down the wrath of God is a defiance of wanting to be a continuing part of God's nation without having to follow what God commanded. This was the serious violation they were committing while in such close proximity to the physical presence and direction of God. This made committing such offenses a far greater risk. As they stood at Mount Sinai, it was clear they should be afraid, but later, in spite of the pillar of cloud and fire which was just as much God's presence leading them day and night and resting on the tabernacle when they stopped, certain people still found the defiance in their hearts strong enough to speak against God, and in particular the man whom they said they wanted as their go-between. Whether Moses was right or wrong in his actions was between him and God. The people had made an agreement they would listen to Moses in place of hearing the voice of God directly. In this, we should be able to see how egregious it was for Israel to rebel in the ways they did, along with seeing why God said the generation who had asked for this arrangement would all die in the wilderness without going into the promised land.

The new generation of Israel would be those who simply grew up with the Law in place. Following the feasts each year, utilizing the sacrificial laws for those times they were required to and everything else the Law asked for. It was more of what the next generation simply looked at as the way it had always been. By the time we get to the end of the Torah this is the state the nation is in. This new generation was the adults raising children who would truly only know a life dictated by the Law. It would be this kind of nation that we see God interacting with from that point forward. It is kind of like the transition from Adam and Eve to the rest of us. Neither Adam nor Eve were born. They both were simply created as adults. In making a man and woman God put in motion the biological functions that would bring out the ability for more humans to exist through the process of each of us being born, living as children, and developing into adults. In spite of if the fall had ever happened or not (meaning there would not be the situation of anyone growing old), every human after Adam and Eve would have to go through this process Adam and Eve never experienced. In Israel, those who were young enough to survive the forty years in the wilderness barely remembered Egypt, I am sure. Those who did remember it did so only as the place they were in as children, and that is very different from being the adults who actually serviced the Pharaoh. These children had likely never known a hard day of working to make bricks for Egyptian building and all the digging, pulling, hauling, etc. their parents did as slaves. This too speaks to the severity of God's reactions.

If one looks at hardships older generations had to face, we see it often drives those generations to have very different thoughts than we do about things. A farmer who plows his field behind a team of horses appreciates the comfort of sitting on a tractor to do the same work in less time than his son who never used the horses. The father complaining about the tractor being hard would mean something different than the son being ignorant enough to do the same. The adults who lived in direct servitude in Egypt should have had a greater appreciation for the freedom and blessings God granted the nation. They had also seen firsthand how God easily overpowered the mighty Pharaoh they feared for their lives to even defy. For that first generation to ever suggest it might have been better not to have left Egypt or desire to turn back, was a tremendous offense! However, as we end the Torah we are past all that. God now deals with a nation of people who basically have always lived as His nation. While this brings more responsibility in some aspects, there is a much more dynamic curve to the interaction. God was now dealing with His nation, not a people who had thought of themselves as just a people of their own who had come to directly serve this Law. God was no longer simply trying to enforce an agreement the people had made with Him, He was ready to work with the nation to develop them into all the Law was meant to make them. If we look at the way it unfolded from here, we see that took a tremendous amount of time in that where we get to with Solomon building the temple and putting the temple service in motion was about 450 years after the end of the Torah, and this really represents the more pentacle of what the Law was meant to make the nation look like.

All of what we have been talking about is exactly why the next group of books after the Torah are called the books of history; because that is exactly what they are. They are the history of Israel's journey forward as they lived, grew, made mistakes, etc. inside the framework of the Law defining or at least being the bedrock of their culture. In these next books we see how Israel followed the words God gave them and how they did not. We see how the times Israel got it right they received the blessings Moses told them the words could bring, and how the times they failed brought the curses Moses had warned them would come. In a way you could say this "transition," of sorts, is only from direct training of the nation in the ways of the Law to the more straightforward action and reaction life it was meant to create. It is a lot like being trained for military service. Those who have done it know how a drill sergeant gets up in one's face and yells and screams about every little mistake you make from the moment you step off the bus, but once that basic training is over, there is simply the expectation you will follow that training in obeying your commanding officer and using it to do your job. That's what the history books go into. A time of Israel needing to apply all they had learned and suffering the consequences, to their getting it totally correct or totally wrong and everything in between.

Now, as we go into these books there is one thing we want to look at which I believe we have touched on near the first of this study, but if so, it has been awhile. As we move from the Torah, we will go forward running down the separation of the books in the categories the Christians use. Of course, there can

be variation among groups, but what we are following is very much the standard for most all Christians. That being said, it is important we keep in mind the groupings are a bit different when one looks at how it is done by the Jews. As we talked about above, there is a reason we should call the Old Testament the Hebrew Bible, and the simplicity of that is the fact it was unto them the Torah was committed, and due to them having the Law that the rest of the books exist. In what way is it not a Hebrew Bible? Yet it is for all of us because that is why God set up a chosen nation, and we have talked a lot in this study about that. I realize with that and so many other things I talk about in these studies some will ask, why would we go with the breaking into grouping of the books the way Christians do it instead of the way the Jews do? To that, I will say we will not completely do such a thing in that this is why we are talking about the differences here, and will continue to talk about it as we go. However, the other factor has to do with the truth we have here a rare occasion where there is nothing wrong with the way either side does this, and in truth, value is seen in the ways both groups do it!

We need to keep in mind that just as I have talked about time and time again the fact chapter and verse separations in the Bible are made strictly by man as a reference tool, and we must be careful not to get too caught up on them as meaning anything more, so too these categorizations of books were done strictly by man. The books themselves are mostly just that, individual books. While there is some differences in how even this is looked at between Christians and Jews, they are largely technical differences. However, separating them into groups is something done for specific purposes which differ slightly between the Christians and Jews. What I mean by this is that the books for the most part would have always been separate books. They were writings or collections of writings that comprise a specific stand-alone work, where as the separations of Torah, History, etc. by the Christians were done as a way to organize and teach. This speaks largely to that point about why we are primarily going to go with the Christian way here in this study. If one looks at how the Jews categorize the books of the Hebrew Bible, you see it is done mostly on the basis of how these books were collected and used over time. For the Christians, this categorization of books was done by looking at the entire collection as a whole and determining what might best separate them by subject matter.

This is why I say there is value in looking at both ways. For pure study purposes the Christian way of separating them is good because it was for study purposes the separations were recognized. However, for historic purposes and therefore, perspective purposes, knowing how the Jews separate them and why is also very helpful. These and more facts will keep this study true to what its purpose is, and that is for us as students of the Bible to know the words it contains, along with how they all came together. It is for all of us as true believers to be the people of God through being people of THE BOOK!

Let's stay in God's Word!

