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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

CONTENTS

Go Slow!	3
The Prayers of the Apostles <i>70. Jude :24-25, Part 2</i>	5
The Life and Times of Joshua <i>50. Enemy Reaction</i>	9
Glorious Sinai <i>Part 10</i>	12
Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures <i>1. Its Nature</i>	16

Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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GO SLOW!

“He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). The writer has often had occasion to be thankful that this text was frequently quoted to him by a wise and godly father—in the years of his impetuous youth, and also during the early days of his Christian life—and hesitates not to say that had he heeded its prohibition more constantly and strictly, he had avoided both trouble and repinings. There is indeed a haste which is commendable, but there is also one that is censurable—one that is irrational and injurious, yea, very often fatal. One of the characteristics of the present generation is their craze for speed; and they are paying dearly for the increased tempo of their ways and their frenzied living, as witnessed to not only by the mounting toll of casualties on the highways, but by the multiplying of asylums. Only by definite prayer, constant watchfulness, and strict self-discipline will the child of God be preserved from the evil spirit which is now driving his fellows to destruction. Let him daily recall our opening text.

Those who act hastily usually find they have to repent at their leisure. As a general rule for action, it is wise to remember: “More haste, less good speed”; and the more important be the project, the greater need to carefully ponder its pros and cons. To act by impulse or passion is unworthy of a rational creature. God bids us, “Ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro 4:26): failure to do so occasions many a fall. Every step of life’s journey is beset with snares and dangers, and therefore, should be critically examined. “*Consider* your ways” (Hag 1:5) is the voice of wisdom; and to disregard the same is to invite trouble. “The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15)—alas, how few such are now left in this mad world! Especially is careful reflection and circumspect action called for where our spiritual and eternal interests are concerned. Scripture contains many illustrations of the folly and disaster of acting hastily. It was through doing so that Joshua was beguiled (Jos 9:14-15). Saul’s impetuosity cost him his kingdom (1Sa 13:12, 14), and David’s precipitation was the occasion of great injury (2Sa 16:1-4). Particularly, we should be slow:

1. In addressing the Throne of Grace. Many who disdain pre-composed forms of prayer have erred sadly in their extempore ones. Nothing is more unseemly than for a creature to rush thoughtlessly into the presence of God and chatter like a crane. Certainly, nothing is more impious and reprehensible than for a sinner to affront the Holy One by babbling forth the first things entering his mind. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Ecc 5:2). If Scripture requires us to think before we speak unto our fellows, how much more so ere addressing *God*—lest we too be among those of whom it is said, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psa 106:15). Let not filial boldness degenerate into unholy familiarity. Come before the LORD with awe and reverence. Take time to quieten your carnal passions and compose your mind.

2. In preaching to others. “Be swift to hear; slow to speak” (Jam 1:19) has reference to the Word—verses 18, 21-24. Alas, how many—in this age of “broadcasting” and “loudspeakers”—are rather slow to hear; swift to speak. No sooner do they acquire the merest smattering of the truth than they deem themselves qualified to instruct others. If they do not push themselves to the fore, some silly person will urge them to teach a class or speak in the open air, in complete disregard of the injunction, “Not a novice” (1Ti 3:6)—note why: “Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Those who obtrude the sacred calling do more harm than good. It is not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of vainglory which prompts them. One must severely discipline *himself*, before he is qualified to discipline others (Rom 2:24). But there are many who never take office, yet—despite their utter incompetency—consider themselves well fitted to criticize the minister’s sermons, and argue the deep things of God with those much older than themselves.

3. In resenting reproofs. “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”—the last item, equally with the former, respects the Word of God, especially the *preaching* of it. First, the spirit in which it is delivered: namely, reverently and with dignity, and not boisterously under the sway of passions—the discerning hearer quickly distinguishes between carnal thunder and spiritual fervor. Still less must such a solemn occasion be employed in giving utterance to any personal ill will. Some preachers have deserved the taunt that the pulpit is “the coward’s castle,” using it to attack individuals whom they would be afraid to accuse in private. Second, the spirit in which it is *received*: hotly resenting that which comes home too closely to the hearer. Usually, those who are angriest at a rebuke are the ones needing it. It is a bad sign when we are irri-

tated rather than humbled by faithful preaching. The indignation which rises up against the Word *hinders* our attainment of practical “righteousness,” or performing of what God requires, as James 1:20 shows.

4. In giving vent to an unruly temper. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16) is a call to *self-discipline*. To act hastily is to act without due deliberation. We should always take time to ask whither such a course will lead, or, better, Will it be to God’s glory? The same applies to the words of our mouths. “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Pro 14:29). The former makes it manifest that he has a good understanding of himself, his duty, and his interests, as well as the infirmities of his fellows. Spiritual wisdom causes us to govern our passions, moderate our resentments, and adjourn our fury. But the hasty of spirit allows folly to be his master. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger” (Pro 19:11)—it is a part of the cure to *delay* it. Anger does not grow by degrees as do the other passions, but is strongest at its birth; and therefore, prudent deliberation is the best safeguard. An interval between the inward tumult and the outward manifestation of the “anger” is most important. An open insult is therefore the *test* whether I have “discretion,” or whether I am the slave of my own passion. “Not rendering...railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing” (1Pe 3:9) is the Christian spirit.

5. In judging our fellows. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye...Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Mat 7:3-5). The beholding of motes in our brethren’s eyes indicates a tendency to be more critical of others than of ourselves. “Beholdest” denotes not an occasional observation, but an habitual one. It also shows we are readier to overlook the virtues of others, however excellent, than we are to overlook their minor blemishes. It demonstrates, too, a species of hypocrisy, for if we are quick to discern the infirmities of others, it cannot be through lack of perception—but rather of honesty—that we fail to regard our *own* greater sins. Then seek grace to cultivate the habit of self-judgment. Never allow in yourself what you condemn in another. We are to be neither blind, nor indifferent, to a brother’s failings; yet we cannot help him in meekness (Gal 6:1), till we have learned to judge ourselves unsparingly.

6. “He that believeth shall not make haste” in the pursuit of wealth. “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want” (Pro 21:5). The diligent is usually contrasted with the sluggard and slothful (Pro 13:4, etc.); and here, with the *hasty*: the thoughts of each producing their own fruits. The patient, plodding man of industry perseveres in spite of all difficulties, and content to increase his substance by degrees: never relaxing, and never yielding to discouragement. Such exercise of diligence is, under the blessing of God, prospered (Pro 10:22). But as indolence is the opposite of diligence, so “haste” or undisciplined impulse is its excess. The hand acts only too often without the judgment. The hasty man is driven by a worldly spirit into ill-considered projects and rash speculations, only to find it is the sure road to want. Those who are greedy of gain are generally unscrupulous in their methods. (See also Proverbs 28:20, 22; 1 Timothy 6:9-10).

7. In interpreting God’s providences. Much caution and wisdom needs to be used in drawing deductions from God’s ordering of our affairs. Jacob is far from being the only one who hastily declared, “All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36), when in reality, God was making them work for his good. We are greatly the losers when we do not possess our souls in patience and quietly wait for God to make things plain to us. When David said in his haste, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1), he drew an entirely wrong inference from the painful circumstances he was then in, for the hour of Saul’s fall and of his own deliverance was at hand. The LORD was on the point of extricating His servant from his long and sore afflictions, but at the last moment, his faith failed! Again, how often we draw a wrong conclusion from the Lord’s testing of our patience, and, because an answer is not granted speedily, imagine He has turned a deaf ear to our prayers. What a warning against *that* is Psalm 31:22! May both writer and reader earnestly seek grace to guard against these seven sins.



THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

70. Jude :24-25, Part 2

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling” (Jude :24). Who *are* the ones that the Lord Jesus thus preserves? Not every one who professes to believe and be a follower of His, as is clear from the case of Judas Iscariot! Then whom? Why, those who make a genuine effort to respond to the exhortations found in the verses immediately preceding. Those who—so far from being content with their present knowledge and spiritual attainments—sincerely endeavour to build up themselves “on [their] most holy faith” (Jude :20). Those who—so far from being indifferent to the state of their hearts—jealously watch their affections, that their love of God be preserved pure, healthy, vigorous, and in regular exercise. Those who—so far from taking pleasure in flirting with the world and indulging their carnal lusts—are “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude :23) Those who pray fervently for the assistance of the Holy Spirit therein, and who are deeply solicitous about the welfare of their brethren and sisters in Christ. *Such* are the ones who will be preserved from apostasy—despite all their weakness and frailties.

It is of vital importance to a sound knowledge of Scripture that we observe the *order* in which truth is therein set forth. For example, we find David saying, “Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God” *before* he prayed, “Uphold me according unto thy word” (Psa 119:115-116). There had been no sincerity in praying God to support him, unless he had resolved to obey the divine precepts—it would be horrible mockery for anyone to ask God to sustain him in a course of self-will. First, a holy purpose and resolution on our part, and *then* the seeking of enabling grace. It is of equal importance to a right understanding of Scripture that we do not separate what God has joined together, and detach a sentence from its qualifying context. We often read the quotation, “My sheep...shall never perish,” but while that is substantially correct, they are not the precise words Christ used. Rather, did He say, “And *they* shall never perish,” previously declaring, “My sheep hear [heed!] my voice, and I know [approve] them, and they *follow me* [not their natural inclinations]: And I give unto them eternal life; and *they* [the heedful and obedient ones] shall never perish” (Joh 10:27-28).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” The discerning reader will perceive in the above remarks that we have anticipated and answered the question of *how* Christ preserves His people. He does so in a manner very different from that in which He “keeps” the planets in their courses—by physical energy, namely, by the effectual operations of His grace within their souls. Christ preserves His people not in a course of reckless self-pleasing, but in one of self-denial. He preserves by moving them to heed His warnings and admonitions, to practice His precepts and follow the example which He has left them. He preserves them by enabling them to persevere in faith and holiness. We are “kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1Pe 1:5); and faith respects His commandments (Psa 119:66; Heb 11:8), as well as His promises. Christ indeed does all, yet in us and by us—causing us to concur and respond. He works in us “both to will and *to do* of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Not that He preserves His people because of, or as the result of, *their* perseverance—nor irrespective of the same—but rather, *through* or by means of it.

After exhorting the saints as he had done in verses 20-23, the apostle then intimated *where* they must look for their enablement and for the divine blessing on their endeavours: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” His readers must place the whole of their dependence for preservation on the Lord Jesus. That was not said to check their industry, but to encourage hope. It is a great relief unto faith to know that “God is able to make him stand” (Rom 14:4). John Gill (1697-1771) began his comments on Jude :24 by saying, “The people of God are *liable* to fall into temptation, into sin, into errors...and even into final and *total apostasy*, were it not for divine power.” Yea, they are painfully sensible both of their evil proclivities and their frailty, and therefore, do they frequently cry unto the LORD, “Hold thou me up” (Psa 119:117). As they read of Adam in a state of innocency being unable to keep himself from falling, and likewise the angels in heaven, they know full well that an imperfect and sinful creature cannot do so of himself. The way to heaven is a “narrow” one (Mat 7:14), and there are precipices on either side. There are foes within and without seeking his destruction; and he has no more strength of his own than had poor Peter when put to the proof by a maid.

Every figure used in the Bible to set forth a child of God emphasizes his weakness and helplessness: a sheep, a branch of the vine, a bruised reed, and a smoking flax. It is only as we experientially discover our weakness that we learn to prize more highly the One who is able to keep us from falling. Does a reader

tremblingly say, "I fear that I too may perish in the wilderness"? Not so, if your prayer be sincere when you cry, "Hold up my goings in thy paths" (Psa 17:5). Christ is able to protect you, because His power is limitless and His grace boundless. What strength this should give the wearied warrior! David comforted himself therewith when he declared, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psa 23:4). There is a twofold safeguarding of the elect spoken of in this epistle: the one before regeneration; and the other, after. In the opening verse, they are spoken of as "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" (Jude :1). They were set apart unto salvation by the Father in His eternal decree (2Th 2:13), and "preserved" *before* they were effectually called. Wonderful and blessed fact is that. Even while wandering from the fold, yea, when hating Him, His love watched over them (Jer 31:3); and His power delivered them from an untimely grave. Death cannot seize an elect soul, until it has been born again!

What has just been pointed out should make it very evident that there is no question whatever about the Lord's *willingness* to preserve His people: if He kept them from natural death while in a state of unregeneracy, much more will He deliver them from spiritual death, now that He has made them new creatures (compare Rom 5:9-10). If Christ were not willing to "make all grace abound" unto His people (2Co 9:8), to "keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2Ti 1:12), to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18), and to "save them to the uttermost [or 'for evermore']" (Heb 7:25), He most certainly would not tantalize them by affirming in each passage that "he is able" to do these things. When Christ asked the question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Mat 9:28) of the two blind men who besought Him to have mercy upon them, He was not raising a doubt in their minds as to His readiness to give them sight, but was challenging their faith—as the next verse makes evident. Let the reader compare our remarks on Ephesians 3:20, at the close of previous articles. "Unto him that is *able* to keep you from falling" was a general term to include not only His might and willingness, but His goodness and munificence.

It is indeed true that the power of Christ is far greater than what He actually exercises, for it is infinite; and were He so disposed, He could keep His people altogether from sin—but for wise and holy reasons, He does not. As His forerunner reminded the Pharisees, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Mat 3:9), so Christ could have commanded legions of angels to deliver Him from His enemies (Mat 26:53)—but He would not. The exercise of His power was and is regulated by God's eternal purpose: He puts it forth only so far as He has stipulated to do so by covenant engagement. Thus, "Unto him that is able to keep you *from falling*" has reference not to every kind of falling, but to the fatal errors of those mentioned in Jude :4, from being led astray by the sophistries and examples of heretical teachers. As the Shepherd of God's sheep, Christ has received a charge to preserve them—not from straying, but from destruction. It is the gross sins spoken of in the context, when joined with obstinacy and impenitence, from which Christ delivers His people—the "presumptuous sins" of Psalm 19:13, unpardonable sins, such as suicide. In other words, it is from total and final apostasy that Christ keeps all of "his own."

It is His office and work thus to keep His people. They were given to Him by the Father with that end in view. He is in every way qualified for the same, both considering His deity and His humanity (Heb 2:18). All power has been given to Him in heaven and earth. He is as willing as He is competent, for it is the Father's will that He should lose none of them (Joh 6:39), and therein He delights. He has a personal interest in them, for He has bought them for Himself. He is accountable for their custody. He therefore preserves them from being devoured by sin. No feeble Saviour is ours, but rather One that is clothed with omnipotence. That was manifest even during the days of His humiliation, when He cast out demons, healed the sick, and stilled the tempest by His authoritative fiat. It was evidenced when, by a single utterance, He caused those who came to arrest Him to fall backward to the ground (Joh 18:6). It was supremely demonstrated in His personal victory over death and the grave. That almighty power is exercised in ordering all the affairs of His people, and continually directing their wills and actions throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Of His vineyard, He declares, "I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa 27:3).

"And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude :24). Here is the second reason which prompted this outburst of adoration. Christ not only protects His people here, but has provided for their felicity hereafter. Such is His grace and power that He makes good unto them all that God has purposed, and whatsoever He has promised. The "presentation" of them unto Himself includes both an individual and a corporate one. The former is at death, when He takes the believer unto Himself. Inexpressibly blessed is this: that upon its dismissal from the body, the soul is conducted into the immediate presence of God, and that the Saviour Himself has the admitting of it into heaven and the actual

presenting of it. The disembodied soul, rid of all corruption and defilement, is received by Christ to the glory of God. He will set that redeemed soul before Himself with great complacency of heart, so that it will reflect His own perfections. He will advance it to the highest honour, fill it with glory, express to it the utmost of His love, and behold it with delight. Christ receives each blood-washed soul at death to His everlasting embraces, and presents it before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Our present passage also looks forward to the time when Christ will publicly present His people corporately unto Himself, when the Head and Saviour who “loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25) will “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). This will be the certain and triumphant result of His love, as it will be the consummation of our redemption. The Greek word for “present” means “to set alongside of.” Having cleansed the Church from all her natural pollution, and prepared and adorned her for her destined place as the companion of His glory, He will—formally and officially—take her unto Himself; and it will be announced, “The marriage of the Lamb is come” (Rev 19:7). Christ will have made the Church comely with His own perfections; and she will be full of beauty and splendour, like a bride adorned for her husband. He will then say, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7). She will be “all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold”; and of her, it is said, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty” (Psa 45:11, 13); and He will be for ever the satisfying Portion of her joy.

In addition, 2 Corinthians 4:14 indicates that Christ will also “present” the Church unto God on the resurrection morn, and will then exultantly say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13)—not one lost, all perfectly conformed to His holy image. He will present us before God for His inspection, acceptance, and approbation. “He will present us in the court of heaven, before the Throne of the eternal Father, as His ransomed people, as recovered from the ruins of the fall, as saved by the merits of His blood. They shall not only be raised from the dead by Him, but publicly and solemnly presented to God as His, as recovered to His service, and as having a title in the covenant of grace to the blessedness of heaven”—Albert Barnes (1798-1870). It is Christ taking His place before God as the triumphant Mediator, owning the “children” as God’s gift to Him, confessing His oneness with them, delighting in the fruits of His work. He presents them “faultless”—justified, sanctified, and glorified. The manner in which He does so will be “with exceeding joy,” for He shall then see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. In Jude 15, we learn of the doom awaiting the apostates; here, the bliss appointed the redeemed—they will for ever shine in Christ’s righteousness; and He will find His complacency in the Church as the partner of His blessedness.

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude :25). Seeing that the LORD is arrayed with glory and beauty (Job 40:10), we should continually ascribe these excellencies unto Him (Exo 15:11; 1Ch 29:11). The saints are to publish and proclaim the perfections of their God: “Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psa 66:2). This is what the apostles did, and we should emulate them. Here, He is adored for His wisdom. This may present a difficulty to young theologians who have learned to distinguish between the incommunicable attributes of God (such as His infinity and immutability), and His communicable—i.e. mercy, wisdom, etc. Seeing that God has endowed some of His creatures with wisdom, how can He be said to be “*only wise*”? First, He is so, *superlatively*. His wisdom is so vastly superior to that of men and angels; theirs is naught. Second, He is so, *essentially*. God’s wisdom is not a quality separate from Himself as ours is—many are men who are far from being wise men, but God would not be God if He were not omniscient. Third, He is so, *originally*—without derivation. All wisdom is *from* God, but He has all *in* Himself. All the wisdom of creatures is but a ray from His light.

Three things call for our careful attention here: the Person praised, the motives prompting the same, and the substance of the adoration or the praise itself. The One here worshipped is the Mediator. The reasons for so honouring Him are the omnipotence and omniscience with which He is possessed, and which are gloriously displayed in His saving of the Church. In view of what is predicated of Him in Jude :24, there should not be the slightest doubt in our minds that “the only wise God” of verse 25 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is His particular province as the Shepherd to preserve His Church from destruction and to present it in glory to the Father. Furthermore, the added epithet, “God our Saviour,” clinches the matter. Here, absolute deity is ascribed to Him: “the only wise *God*,” as it also is in Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1, etc. Christ the Son is “the only wise God,” though not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit (compare Joh 17:3; Rev 15:4). Probably He is here designated such in designed contrast with the false and foolish

“gods” of the heretical corruptors of the context: the “God” of the Unitarians, the Arminians, the “Modernists,” is fictitious and puerile.

It is the strength and sufficiency of Christ for all the concerns of His mediation which is here magnified. He is adored as the One who will triumphantly complete the work given Him to do: something which no mere creature—no, not the archangel—could accomplish. None but one who is both God and man could act as mediator. None but a divine person could offer an adequate satisfaction unto divine justice. None but one possessed of infinite merits could provide a sacrifice of infinite value. None but God could preserve the sheep in the midst of wolves. In Proverbs, Christ is denominated “wisdom” and is heard speaking as a distinct person (Pro 8:11-12, 14, 32-33). He was heralded as the “Wonderful, Counsellor” (Isa 9:6). He designated Himself “wisdom” in Luke 7:35. He is expressly called “the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24), for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). His wisdom appears in His creating all things (Joh 1:3), in His governing all things (Heb 1:3), and in that the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Joh 5:22).

The consummate wisdom of Christ was manifested during the days of His flesh. He opened unto men the secrets of God (Mat 13:11). He declared, “The Son can do nothing of himself [which, in the light of verse 30, means He does nothing independently of the Father’s will], but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever *he* doeth, these also doeth *the Son* likewise” (Joh 5:19)—thereby affirming an equality of competency. He “needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (Joh 2:25). Those who heard Him teach “were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (Mat 13:54). Christ’s unique wisdom appeared in answering and silencing His enemies: “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46) testified those sent to arrest Him. He so confounded His critics that at the end, “neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Mat 22:46). Since, then, He is endowed with omniscience, let us find no fault with any of His dealings with us, let us take to Him all our problems, and let us confide absolutely in Him—putting ourselves and all our affairs into His hands.

Since He *is* “the only wise God our Saviour”—the sole, sufficient, and successful Saviour—let us laud Him as such. As those in heaven cast their crowns before the Lamb and extol His peerless perfections, so should we who are still upon earth. Since Christ subjected Himself to such unspeakable dishonor and abasement for our sakes, yea, unto death itself—and that the death of the Cross—how readily and heartily should we honour and magnify Him, crying with the apostle unto Him, “Be glory and majesty, dominion and power” (Jude :25)! “Glory” is excellence displayed, with an approbation of the same, and signifies the high honour and esteem which is due unto Christ because of His perfections, whereby He infinitely surpasses all creatures and things. “Majesty” refers to His exalted dignity and greatness, which make Him to be honoured and preferred beyond all, having received a name which is above every name. “Dominion” imports the right of government, because of His imperial authority as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). “Power” is that might by which He does whatsoever He pleases, so that “none can stay his hand” (Dan 4:35).

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, *both now and ever*. Amen.” Note well the two words which we have placed in italics. Radically different was the inspired concept of Jude from that of so many “students of prophecy” who postpone Christ’s reign to some future “millennial” era. It is both the present and the endless dignities of the Mediator which are here in view. He has already been “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9). “Majesty” is His today, for He is exalted “far above all principality, and power,” for God “*hath* [not ‘will’!] put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:21-22). “Dominion” is also exercised by Him now, for all power has been given Him “in heaven *and in earth*” (Mat 28:18). “Power,” too, is put forth by Him in the present, for He is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3) and “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). So shall He reign, not merely for a thousand years, but *for ever*. Amen. Thus, does Jude conclude the most solemn of all epistles with this paean of holy exultation to the glory of the Lamb.



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

50. Enemy Reaction

The scene which is set before us in the closing verses of Joshua 8 is equaled only by that which is exhibited in Exodus 24. The events described therein are parallel in every way, the latter being explained by the former. In each, there is a public assembling of the whole congregation of Israel before the LORD. In each, a federal engagement is solemnly entered into. Each was transacted upon a mount, where an altar was erected, the divine Law prominently honoured, and the people ate before JEHOVAH. The difference between them is that in the former, it was the first generation of Israel which had recently emerged from Egypt that was concerned; while in the latter, it was the first generation of those who had shortly before entered Canaan. The claims of JEHOVAH were now made known unto this new generation in a striking and impressive manner, and they were required to aver their recognition of those claims and affirm subjection to the same. First, an altar had been erected and sacrifices offered thereon. Most appropriately had “the peace offerings” a place, for a portion of it was for the LORD; and a portion of it was eaten by the offerer (Lev 7:32-34)—for a covenant is a *mutual* engagement between two parties, and thus, the LORD and His people here communed together.

Upon the stones of that altar, the Decalogue was written. *Typically*, that set forth the fact that the Law had been magnified by Christ (Isa 42:21). In His teaching, He had fully maintained its authority (Mat 5:17); in His life, He rendered perfect obedience to it; and in His death, He endured its awful penalty. *Practically*, we are there taught that the redeemed are to receive the Law from the Redeemer. Christ did not keep the Law for His people in order that they might be freed from its holy requirements, but to honour God therein and leave them an example that they should follow His steps. In order thereto, He has not only brought them under the deepest possible obligations of gratitude unto Himself, bidding them to express their love unto Him by keeping His commandments, but has also procured for them the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit, who puts His laws into their hearts and writes them upon their minds (Heb 10:16): that is, implanting a *love* for them, and *impressing* them with their importance, authority, and spirituality. And therefore, it is that the truly regenerate delight in the Law of God after the inward man, and with their minds, serve the same (Rom 7:22, 25).

It is to be duly noted that in the Holy Spirit’s description of the company convened on that auspicious occasion, express mention is made, as well, of “*the stranger*, as he that was born among them” (Jos 8:33)—which, as previously pointed out, anticipated the time when the Gentiles would also be brought into the congregation of the LORD. The various references made to “the stranger” in the Law of Moses have not received anything like the attention they should by Christian commentators. Provision was made for “the stranger,” upon his circumcision, to partake of the Passover feast; yea, it was enacted: “One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you” (Exo 12:48-49); yea, even the cities of refuge were available to him equally with the Israelite (Jos 20:9)! Commandment was given unto Israel that “the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself” (Lev 19:34). As he shared Israel’s privileges, so he had to share their obligations also, by entering into covenant with God (Deu 29:11-12); and therefore, if he blasphemed the name of the LORD, the same penalty was inflicted upon him as upon a guilty Hebrew (Lev 24:16).

“And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and *the strangers* that were conversant among them” (Jos 8:34-35). Thus, the entire assembly came under the sound of the just requirements of their Benefactor and Governor. As Deuteronomy 27 informs us, as each of the solemn curses of the Law was uttered by the Levites “with a loud voice”—not an apologetic whisper!—it was required that “all the people shall answer and say, *Amen*” (Deu 27:14-15), thereby solemnly concurring therewith. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, “It was (1) a profession of their faith in the truth of them. (2) An acknowledgment of the equity of them. (3) An imprecation upon themselves as strongly obliged them to have nothing to do with those evil practices upon which the curse was here entailed.” What an example was this occasion of the importance of the public reading of lengthy sections of God’s Word, and that its most unpalatable portions must not be omitted! The reading of the Law to “the strangers” again

intimates that *the Gentiles* are under it. No further mention of “the ark” is found in Joshua, for the covenant had now been ratified by the second generation of Israel.

Israel had marched into Canaan led by the written Law of God (Jos 3:11-17), for the ark of the covenant was the divinely appointed chest in which were deposited and preserved the tables on which the LORD’s own finger had inscribed that Law which Israel had covenanted to keep. The same Law had been borne around the walls of Jericho (Jos 6:4-5), being the minister of vengeance unto the idolatrous Canaanites. That same Law had now been written on the stones of the altar on Ebal (Jos 8:32), thus becoming *the Law of the Land*. Was not this God’s very object in enabling Israel to conquer Canaan: that He should have not only a people in obedience to Him, but a country in which the blessedness of their obedience should be exhibited before the surrounding nations? Beyond question, for Moses declared, “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding *in the sight of the nations*, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deu 4:5-6; and compare 1Ki 10:8-9). As JEHOVAH reminded their descendants centuries later, “Ye are my witnesses” (Isa 43:10; and compare Mal 3:12).

“And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof; That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord” (Jos 9:1-2). At first glance, there appears little pertinency or propriety in mentioning this detail immediately after what was described in the closing verses of chapter 8. But careful readers will observe that this passage begins with the word “and”; and those who have followed us through the previous articles of this series should know by now what use to make of it. It calls for thoughtful attention to what immediately precedes, so that the force of the connection may be the better perceived by us. And that not merely so as to fix in our minds the order of events, but more especially that we may ascertain the spiritual lessons which are pointed thereby. The book of Joshua contains very much more than a mere historical record of Israel’s conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan, namely, a shadowing forth of that spiritual warfare unto which Christians are called.

Believers in Christ are not only “witnesses” unto Him (Act 1:8)—showing forth His praises, reflecting the moral perfections of His character as disciples and “they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4)—but they are also soldiers of Jesus Christ (2Ti 2:3); and as such, it is especially to the book of Joshua that they should turn for instruction, inspiration, warning, and encouragement. What then are the lessons we should draw from that which is recorded in Joshua 9:1-2? Two, according as we recognize the twofold link between those verses and their context: with that which immediately precedes, and with what is rather more remote. In other words, this coming together of the kings of Canaan, and their agreeing to join forces in making a mass attack upon Israel, is to be regarded first as it is related to that which has just been before us in the closing verses of chapter 8—namely, the magnification of the Decalogue on mount Ebal, and the covenant which was made by the new generation of Israel with JEHOVAH; and then with the whole of chapters 6-8, where the overthrow of Jericho and Ai is narrated. The force of the opening “And” is borne out by the “heard thereof” at the close of Joshua 9:1. It is *the enemy’s* reaction to those events which is here in view.

Brief though their record be, those two verses present to our notice that which is of deep importance, and something which should be particularly heeded by ministers who desire to be faithful to their calling. The Holy Spirit’s mention of this federating of Canaan’s kings to fight against Joshua and Israel—immediately after describing what had taken place on the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim—is obviously designed to supply us with a typical illustration and solemn exemplification of man’s hostility to the Law of God. No sooner did it reach the ears of these kings that Joshua had built an altar on Ebal and had inscribed on its stones the divine Decalogue—which was henceforth to be the Law of the Land—than they made common cause against God’s people and determined to use force, as the “heard thereof” (verse 1) plainly intimates. To acknowledge the rights and authority of the Most High, and submit themselves unto His revealed will, is something which the unregenerate both resent and oppose. They desire to be lords of themselves and are resolved to go their own way. The language expressed by the actions of all of them, and by the mouths of many, is that of the self-willed and arrogant Pharaoh: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” (Exo 5:2). They are determined to please themselves.

Here is the very essence of human depravity. Sin is a revolt against God, a refusing to be in subjection to Him. Sin is not only a determining to follow our own inclinations, but it is a fighting against our Maker and Governor. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Unspeakably solemn is that declaration, and one which is most repugnant to human susceptibilities. Nevertheless, it is a fact which cannot be gainsaid. Proof thereof is furnished in the clause immediately following: "For it [the mind of the natural man] is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). Nothing more plainly evinces the inveterate hostility of the unregenerate unto God than their insubordination and opposition against the divine Law. Few indeed will openly *admit* that they hate God, and fewer still are *aware* of that awful fact, for sin is very deceitful (Heb 3:13) and blinds the judgment (Eph 4:18). Nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than throughout the entire realm of idolatry. If men were pleased with the true God, they would not have manufactured so many false ones. They desire a God and a system of religion which are suited to their depraved inclinations. Millions who bow not before an image of wood or stone, nevertheless, believe in a God which their own sentiments and imaginations have devised; and against *him* (or it), they have no enmity!

But let the true and living God be apprehended as His character is set forth in the Scriptures, and that enmity will soon be more evident. Let Him be known as the divine Potentate who shapes "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour" (Rom 9:21-23), entirely as He pleases; as the ineffably Holy One who cannot look on evil, and hates all workers of iniquity; and as the righteous Judge of all, who will by no means clear the guilty; and the fallen creature's hatred of such a One will appear in its true colours. Let Him give to such creatures His Law, and require unqualified obedience thereto, and they at once rebel. If God would forgo His sovereign rights, their opposition would be subdued; if He would lay aside His scepter, men would cease fighting against Him. But because He declines to do so, the will of the creature is opposed to the will of the Creator, and he refuses subjection to His Throne. Conclusive proof that the sinner's nature is diametrically the opposite of God's is seen in his deadly opposition to the divine government. The moral law is both a revelation of its Author's character and an expression of His will, and man's repudiation of it exhibits the contrariety of sin to holiness.

What has just been pointed out was unmistakably and most solemnly demonstrated when the Lawgiver became incarnate and dwelt here upon earth, for the ill will of religious and irreligious alike was active against Him. Not only was He despised and rejected by men, but as He plainly declared, "They hated me without a cause" (Joh 15:25). Nor did they make any attempt to cloak their malice. While He healed the sick and provided the multitude with loaves and fishes, their hostility was held in abeyance; but when He pressed upon them the claims of His lordship, defined the terms of discipleship, and made known the character and requirements of His kingdom, their resentment soon flared up. Not only did He come unto His own and "his own received him not" (Joh 1:11), but "his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luk 19:14). Let it not be forgotten that it was as "*the King of the Jews*" (Joh 19:3, 19) Christ was crucified! "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [JEHOVAH], and against his anointed [Christ], saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa 2:2-3; and compare Act 4:25-27)—chafing at the divine Law, refusing subjection to the divine authority.

Thus, in the gathering of the kings of Canaan "to fight with Joshua and with Israel" (Jos 9:2)—immediately after the promulgation of the divine Law upon the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim—we have both a solemn adumbration of what took place in the hours immediately preceding our Lord's crucifixion, and an illustration of man's opposition to the Law. Up to this point, the Canaanites had been on the defensive, but in Joshua 9:1-2, we see them preparing to take the offensive, and make a united attack on God's people. The kings there mentioned were of varied nationalities and interests, and occupied widely scattered territories; but here, we behold them sinking their differences and federating together "with one accord" (verse 2)! Just as the priests and scribes, and the Pharisees and Sadducees, united in opposing the incarnate Lawgiver. And just as it is today, both "dispensational" Arminians and "antinomian" Calvinists make common cause in repudiating the Decalogue as the Christian's rule of life. And so will every true servant of Christ discover. Let him give to the Law that place in his ministry which it has in the Scriptures, let him be faithful in discharging his divine commission—and remember, "all the counsel of God" (Act 20:27) includes very much more than what are termed "the doctrines of grace"!—and press upon unbelievers and believers the claims of Christ's kingship, and the strictness and spirituality of the Decalogue, and *he too* will be despised and reviled.



GLORIOUS SINAI

Part 10

It is a great mistake to suppose that because the constitution given to the nation of Israel at Sinai is now obsolete, it contains nothing of real value for God's people in this Christian era. Though the economy there instituted was an introductory and preparatory one—paving the way for something better and eternal—yet its basic principles are enduring and of universal application. While there are hints given in the Old Testament that the order of things established under Moses would pass away, yet plain intimation was also made that its moral elements would continue, yea, come into more effectual and general operation. Thus, when Isaiah made promise of the coming Messiah, it was with the assurance that He would issue from the root of David, and would “*magnify the law*, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21); and he informed the nation that it would be in the “*new heavens and a new earth*” that the grand purpose of the LORD would ultimately be realized (Isa 65:17-18). Jeremiah was even more definite, declaring the LORD would yet make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, different from the one He made at Sinai—different not in its essential matter, but only in its form and efficient administration—saying: “I will put my law in their *inward* parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33)—the same Law in substance, but transferred from the external sphere to the internal sphere.

Ezekiel foretold a new and wondrous work of divine grace, such as Israel as a nation had never experienced, when the Spirit of God should change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh—thereby imparting to them a disposition and ability to walk in God's statutes, and keep and do His judgments (Eze 36:26-27). Joel announced that a time was coming when JEHOVAH would pour out His Spirit “upon all flesh” (Joe 2:28) in such plenitude that spiritual gifts which hitherto had been confined to the few would be bestowed upon many. Micah announced a day when “the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Mic 4:1)—that is, the seat of the divine kingdom would be morally elevated above all human governments; and that there should be such a manifestation of the LORD's presence that many nations would say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for *the law* shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Mic 4:1-5)—producing the most beneficent effects which would make themselves felt throughout the whole earth. Thus, Old Testament prophecy made it clear that God purposed to give a far grander manifestation of Himself than any granted previously, yet at the same time, *retain* in its integrity *the Law* of divine righteousness.

When the fullness of time was come, and God sent forth His Son made of a woman, it is expressly declared that He was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). He came to introduce nothing that was absolutely new, but rather to produce what had been foretold, and to exhibit the perfect exemplification of what had been required by the previous revelations. Though repudiating the perverted Judaism of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord Jesus definitely identified Himself with the Judaism of the Law and the Prophets. At the commencement of His public ministry, in His sermon on the mount, He proclaimed unto His disciples—and in the hearing of a great multitude—the fundamental principles of His kingdom. That discourse stood in much the same relationship to the dawning era, as the promulgation of the Decalogue from Sinai did to the then expiring dispensation; and the links between them are definite and plain. Each was published upon a mount. As the former was prefaced with the divine statement, “I [have] brought you unto myself” (Exo 19:4), and the reminder of His grace in having delivered them from “the house of bondage” (Exo 20:2), so the latter was introduced by a series of “beatitudes” (Mat 5:1-12)—“blessing after blessing pouring itself forth as from a full spring of beneficence,” as one beautifully expressed it.

But no sooner had *grace* breathed those endearing beatitudes than the inflexible demands of *righteousness* were announced: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17). Here at the very outset, the Redeemer made known His attitude and relation to the Law of God. Negatively, it was not His design to render it void; positively, it was the grand purpose of His mission to *substantiate* it—to do what the Law required and to make good what the Prophets had foretold. To leave no room for doubt, our Lord added: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (verse 18). Nor did He stop short there, going on to declare, “Whosoever therefore shall break [Greek *luo*—dissolve or destroy] one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of

heaven" (verse 19). Therein, Christ made it clear that the validity of what was found in the previous communications of God still obtained; and that so far from there being any antagonism between the new order and the old, he who failed to appreciate the righteousness embodied in the minor details of the Law, should be accorded no place of honour in His kingdom.

Finally, He averred with startling plainness, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:20). In the previous verse, He had given warning that even a comparatively small antagonism to the righteousness of the Law would involve a lower position in His kingdom; but here, He makes it known that if any would-be followers of *His* adopted such a low standard as that maintained by the official religionists of that day, they should be entirely excluded therefrom. Then, to the close of His sermon, Christ went on to expose the errors of those who had toned down the exacting demands of the divine Law, setting over against "it was said *by them* of old time" (Mat 5:21, 27) His "But I say unto you," and restoring the Law to its original purity; and insisting that it required not only external compliance, but *inward* conformity. He so explained and enforced the Ten Commandments as to bring fully under their sway the thoughts and intents of the heart, as well as the actions of the life; and insisted that man's response to the Decalogue would determine their places and destinies in His kingdom.

It is a serious and horrible mistake to suppose that Christ here enunciated a new and superior Law to that which had been given at Sinai: rather, did He *rescue* it from the rubbish of the traditions of the rabbins beneath which it had long been buried. In Matthew 5:20, He enunciated a general principle; and from verse 21 onward, He illustrated by various examples *how and wherein* the righteousness of those He would own as His subjects must exceed that of the Pharisees. Let it be particularly noted that the distinctions Christ proceeded to draw did not respect the real and actual teaching of the Law or the Prophets, but instead, human perversions of the same. Not once did He contrast His Word, "But I say unto you" with what "*the LORD* said" at Sinai, but rather, with "It was said by them of old time" (Mat 5:21, 27). He was refuting the errors the Jews had received from their elders. He pressed upon them the strictness, breadth, and exalted spirituality of the Ten Commandments. All that the Pharisees saw in God's "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13) was the prohibition of the act of murder; whereas, our Lord declared that it forbade every thought and lust which led up thereto. They restricted God's "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo 20:14) to "Thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife" (Lev 18:20); but Christ insisted that commandment condemned lustful desires and glances. It was not the Law *per se* that was under consideration, but the rabbins' perversion of it. As if to guard against any wrong impression from what He had said, and to show His teaching was but the enforcement of God's previous revelations, He ended with, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mat 7:12).

Christ was made under the Law, rendered perfect obedience to it in all His actions, and enforced it in His public ministry. We should therefore expect His apostles to honour the same divine standard of righteousness; and they *did*, as an impartial examination of their writings evinces. True, Paul assures the saints they "are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14); but he was there treating of the ground of our *acceptance* with God, and not with our walk: "Law" and "grace" there being parallel with "the law of works" and "the law of faith" in Romans 3:27—we are "*not* under the law" for our *justification*, but under God's gratuitous favour. Romans 6:14 must not be made to clash with Paul's assertion in Romans 7:25: "I myself *serve* the law of God." He also told them that they had "become dead to the law" (Rom 7:4), which is to be understood in precisely the same way as "dead to sin," *judicially*—dead to its condemning power, having suffered the penalty of the same in their Substitute. In the same epistle where those misunderstood expressions are found, conformity to the Law's requirements is presented as the sum of excellence (Rom 13:8-10)—"love is the fulfilling of the law," because, seeking the good of its object, it *prompts unto* what the Law requires.

In that very epistle, the apostle gives it as the characteristic of the spiritual mind; that it assents to the Law as "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12)—yea, as delighting in it (verses 21-22)—whereas of the carnal mind, he says, "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). In his next epistle, he declares believers are "not without law to God, but *under* the law to Christ" (1Co 9:21). Though in a special manner, the herald of divine grace, Paul repeatedly maintained the honour of the Law. To the Galatians, he said, "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neigh-

bour as thyself" (Gal 5:13-14)—thereby manifestly *identifying* the love binding on Christians with the love enjoined in the Decalogue. When exhorting young Christians, he said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," then enforcing his appeal with "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)" (Eph 6:1-2)—he had never appealed to it if the Law had been repealed! James declares, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (Jam 2:8-9)—one who is "dead to the law" (Rom 7:4) in *every* sense could not be a transgressor of it! John insists Christians should walk "even as he [Christ] walked" (1Jo 2:6)—but how could they unless under the same Law?

Returning to our principal design in these articles, let us point out that the history of Israel is full of most important instruction for us today. Nor is that an arbitrary statement of ours. The pen of inspiration declares, "Now these things [Israel's experiences in the wilderness] were *our examples*...Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for *our* admonition" (1Co 10:6, 11). The key to the same is placed in our hands in an earlier chapter: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let *us* keep the feast" (1Co 5:7-8). He is the antitypical Lamb whose vicarious blood saves His people and upon whom they are to feed as their spiritual food. Thus, we have divine warrant to regard God's dealings with Israel of old as adumbrating His gracious actings unto the elect in all generations. While there is much in the New Testament which casts light upon the teaching of the Old, it is equally true that much in the antitype is better understood by a study of the types.

In our opening article, we called attention to the *double* appellation given to the Hebrews by God in His opening words to Moses in the mount (Exo 19:3), and pointed out that it supplies more than a hint of the *twofoldness* of what follows, that the transactions at Sinai need to be viewed in their bearing upon both the national Israel and the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). It is the latter we shall now consider. First, in the grand fact: I have "brought you unto myself" (Exo 19:4); so Christ "[brought] us to God" (1Pe 3:18). "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo 19:5-6). That is entirely an *evangelical* statement. It was *not* "because ye *have* obeyed my voice" I brought you unto Myself, but instead, *Since* I have done so, realize now your obligation and privilege to be subject to Me; and by your submission, both glorify Me and fulfill the high destiny to which I have called you. The "therefore" of verse 5 is obviously a conclusion drawn from the blessed fact stated in verse 4: because Israel had been taken into a relationship which secured for them an interest in JEHOVAH's faithfulness and love, let them henceforth devote themselves to His honour and service.

To call attention to the "if" of Exodus 19:5, and then affirm—as certain "great (?) Bible teachers" have done—that there is *no* "if" in connection with the Christian's blessedness, betrays the grossest ignorance, as a glance at the following passages will show: John 8:31; Romans 8:13 and 11:22; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:6. Moreover, Exodus 19:5 must be interpreted in full harmony with the divine preface to the Ten Commandments: "I *am* the LORD thy God" (Exo 20:2)—not "I *will be so* if ye obey me." Had it been *that*, it would have been a pure covenant of works—the reward given in a way of pactional debt. But at Sinai, God *inverted* the order of precept and promise from what obtained in the Adamic covenant, and declared Himself to be, in a way of sovereign grace, JEHOVAH—Israel's God and Redeemer; and *then* gave them the Law to show "what is good and what the LORD required of them." Rightly did Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754) declare in his sermon, "A Treasure of Gospel-Grace Dugged Out of Mount Sinai" (1722): "It was a covenant of *grace* that was proclaimed at mount Sinai: the Law was added to it because of transgression, and grafted upon it as a rule of obedience."

"I am the LORD thy God" (Exo 20:2). Thy God on the ground of electing grace. Thy God by redemptive mercy and power. Thy God who hast ransomed thee from the enemy. Thy God who will provide for thee, and defend thee. Thy God to rule over thee—*not* to destroy, but to bless. Thy God "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exo 34:6). As E. Erskine so well expressed it: "When He says, 'I am the LORD thy God,' He in effect says, All that I have I make over to you." I am thy God for thee to love and trust, to serve and glorify. Since I *am* the LORD thy God, make Me thine everlasting Portion, thy chief Delight, thy sole End. It is *this* which makes My yoke easy. Remember what I have done for thee, and thou wilt find that My commandments "are not grievous" (1Jo 5:3). They are the precepts of My *love*, and grateful souls will take pleasure in fulfilling them. As that is the fundamental *blessing* of the covenant, so "Thou shalt have no other gods" (Exo 20:3) was the leading *duty* devolving upon them; and so it is upon *us*. "I am the LORD thy God" who redeemed thee from bondage is the sum

and substance of His *new* covenant with us; and then He writes His Law upon our hearts (Heb 8:8-10)—i.e. brings our hearts in subjection thereto and causes us to delight therein.

Though Christians are delivered from the curse of the Law, its precepts are still binding upon them. The principle of grace which is communicated to their souls at the new birth inclines them to love God and please Him; but love needs to be *directed*. I may respect and revere my master, but I must know the rules of his house if I am to serve him acceptably. Love is not a “rule,” but a *motive*. Love does not inform me *what* to do, but *how* to do it. Love constrains me to do God’s will; but in order to learn what is His will, I must look elsewhere. The Law is a necessity both for God’s maintenance of His authority over us and as a rule of life for our guidance. Moreover, the servant is not greater than his Lord! Christ did not honour the Law that His people might slight it. There is no higher *privilege* than following the example He has left us. God’s covenant in Christ of grace and promise (adumbrated in the Abrahamic) has for its necessary complement a covenant of gratitude and duty (adumbrated at Sinai) on our part. The divine Decalogue was indeed kept perfectly by our justifying Head; yet, as our sanctifying Head, Christ requires that *we* keep it gratefully—not in order to our acceptance by Him, but that we may be conformed to Him and glorify Him in our daily walk.

Superficial dispensationalists, who have a penchant for drawing contrasts (imaginary or real), delight to set over against the *distance* at which Israel were placed from JEHOVAH upon the holy mount (Exo 19:12) such a verse as, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). But they forget that Exodus 19:12 is preceded by 19:4—“brought you unto myself.” Furthermore, they overlook the fact that in the New Testament itself, Deity is represented as “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” (1Ti 6:16); and that we are bidden to serve Him “with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). But, what is yet more reprehensible, these dispensationalists fail to tell their gullible followers that Exodus 24 shows us the representative heads of the nation enjoying the most intimate fellowship with the God of Israel, eating and drinking in His immediate presence (verses 9-11)! Nor have they any understanding of the contrast drawn by the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 between Judaism and Christianity, and *not* between “Law and Grace.” In Hebrews 12:18, the Judaizers were simply being met on their *own ground* and shown what the Law was when viewed simply in itself, when *detached* from the former covenant of promise—fitted only to inspire terror and horror, and to curse and slay. Not that that was God’s *intent*, but rather, the effects attending it, when viewed as a thing apart.

The Law was not given to Israel at Sinai as a bestower of life, nor as a means for procuring God’s favour—for Israel already had that. Nor was it given so that by their obedience thereto, Israel might obtain Canaan—for that inheritance was theirs by sure promise to Abraham. That it was *not* given for their salvation is clear from the *altar* on Sinai (Exo 20:24; 24:4). Rather was the Law given to a ransomed people: “The LORD thy God *redeemed* thee: *therefore* I command thee this thing to day” (Deu 15:15). It was given as a revelation of that righteousness which God required from them as His favoured and peculiar people. It was given to enforce His claims upon them as their Lord and Governor. Yea, it was given “in the hand of a *mediator*” (Gal 3:19)! Moreover, it was accompanied by the ceremonial law, wherein provision was made for their transgressions of the moral. It was also supplemented by the priesthood, so that their fellowship with the Holy One might be maintained. Once again, we quote that admirable summary of St. Augustine’s (354-430): “The Law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the Law might be fulfilled.”

Let it not be forgotten that *Moses* wrote of Christ (Joh 5:46); and that the Law, as well as the Prophets, witnessed to the righteousness which is *by faith* (Rom 3:21). Glorious Sinai! Where there was such an illustrious display of JEHOVAH’s holiness and majesty. Where He proclaimed Himself as the covenant God of the children of Abraham. Where He gave them that blessed charter and constitution which distinguished them from all other nations. Where He revealed Himself as the Lover and LORD of His people, and their Redeemer and Ruler. Where He promulgated the perfect rule of righteousness for His saints in all generations. Where He published His *Gospel*, as well as His Law. Where He made full provision to maintain His people in communion with Himself. Where He permitted them to eat and drink in His presence.



DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

1. Its Nature

During the course of our articles, upon the doctrine of divine revelation, we showed that one of the media or means through which God has made Himself known unto men is His written Word; and considerable space was devoted to a presentation of some of the varied and conclusive evidence which demonstrates that Word to be of divine origin. But the subject of the divine authorship of the Scriptures is much too important to dismiss with a consideration of only that single feature: there are other aspects which have an equal claim upon our attention. Not a few of the enemies of the truth will acknowledge that the Bible was written by divine inspiration; but they at once neutralize the worth of such a testimony, by affirming in the next breath that men like John Milton (1608-1674) and Alfred Tennyson, 1st Byron (1809-1898) were also inspired by Him. Thus, it is required of us that we examine other unique characteristics of the Scriptures, and particularly, the *nature* of their inspiration and the *measure* of the same. As we did not wish to cumber our discussion of the fact of inspiration by bringing in its modus and extent, we left them for a separate examination.

Before taking up these other branches of our theme, it should be pointed out that it is by no means to be concluded that during the earliest centuries of human history, God's people were left without any other revelation of the divine character and will than was supplied by the works of creation and the voice of conscience. When we are informed that "by *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Heb 11:4)—and bear in mind that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17)—it is plain that Abel must have received some oral communication from God. Jude tells us that Enoch "prophesied." So, too, God revealed Himself and made known His will to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and probably much of what He said to them was passed on to their descendants. But after separating the nation of Israel unto Himself, the LORD determined that His Word should be placed on permanent record: that His truth should remain inviolable in the world as a pure and constant source of instruction to all future generations—which His providence has so jealously and amazingly safeguarded, as to constitute nothing short of a miracle.

In His Word, God has laid a foundation—rendered firm and sure by unimpeachable testimony—on which faith may stand unmoved by all the assaults of unbelief and infidelity. True it is that the average believer is not capable of directly refuting the sophistries of his opponents; but let him remember that no objections can invalidate, because they do not affect *the evidence* which has been adduced for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Difficulties never alter the nature of things, nor make that which is true to be false. It would be just as logical to reject mathematics as a science, because no man has yet succeeded in squaring the circle, as to spurn the Bible, because there are some things in it which are beyond the reach of reason. Infidels refuse the Bible not through lack of convincing proofs of its authenticity, but because of the enmity of their carnal minds against the holiness of its teaching. They are engrossed with time, and indifferent to eternity; their hearts are set upon things below, and they have no relish for things above. They are wedded to their lusts, and will not receive that which calls upon them to deny the same. They hate the light (Joh 3:19), and therefore, deliberately close their eyes to it.

We are now to consider more directly *how* God's Word was communicated to men; and it is especially for the benefit of young preachers that we do so. Let it be admitted at the outset that we are about to enter the realm of *mystery*. Nor should that statement in the least dismay or surprise the reader—for such is ever the case when we approach the wondrous works of God. Whatever He produces is not only above a man's power to effect, but above his full comprehension. Particularly is the latter the case, when God operates in the human realm, working in men "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13), yet without destroying their free agency. As the incarnate Word was both God and man, so His written Word is both divine and human. As it was the deity of Christ which gave infinite value to what He did by and through His humanity, so it was the power of God which precluded the infirmities of the penmen he employed. The problem now before us resolves itself into that which ever obtains where there is the conjuncture of divine operations and the exercise of human agency—the domination of the former, and the concurrence of the latter.

The question we shall seek to resolve is this: How did the Book of books come into existence? What is the true genesis of the Scriptures? We can conceive of three ways in which God could have produced a book to be read by men. First, by His own immediate energy, acting directly and alone—as He did when He wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger on the tables of stone. Second, He might have employed men as mere automatons, neither conscious nor free, but serving as His mechanical agents. Third, have fitted men by constitutional endowment, spiritual gifts, and providential circumstances, thereby qualifying them to be the recipients of special divine communications; but so fully possessing and controlling them by His Spirit, as to transmit those communications to posterity without any of their infirmities mingling therewith. This third way is the one that God chose: one which is not only fully analogous to all His methods, but which made most for His own glory. He was pleased that the experiences through which David passed should be reflected in the metaphors found in his Psalms, to exhibit truth in its most logical relations by employing the trained mind of Paul, and to use the one who leaned on Jesus' bosom to write on the subject of divine fellowship.

Thus, while the Bible was written by men, it is at the same time, and in the most absolute sense, the Word of God. The Bible is a thoroughly human book: penned by human agents, addressed to human beings, perfectly adapted to our life in this world—a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path (Psa 119:105). It is expressed in human thought and language. It contains instructions suited to every situation in which man finds himself. It appeals to every sentiment in the entire gamut of human emotions, and was written by “men of like passions” as ourselves (Act 14:15)—yet it is unmarred by the least blemish. As Christ was true man, “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15), so the Bible is thoroughly human, yet without the slightest error. The parallels between the incarnate and the written Word are many and striking. As Christ was not only man—but God Himself—so the Bible, though truly human, is also divine. As the incarnation of the Son—particularly His partaking of the substance of the virgin birth without being tainted by sin—was a miracle, so the production of the Bible through human media—without their limitations marring it—is a miracle. The plan adopted by God is an additional proof of the divine wisdom in producing the Holy Scriptures.

And is not *this* exactly what we should expect: that if God vouchsafed a revelation of His mind and will unto the world, He would not expose it unto the hazard of being corrupted or mutilated by the instruments through which it was transmitted; nay, that He would put forth His power and work in a supernatural manner to prevent such a thing? To err is human, but He who made man is fully capable of using him to perform a work from which all defects are excluded. He “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean” (Job 14:4) is fully competent to produce an infallible Book through fallible penmen. The *fact* that God has done so—and our assurance thereof—is of far more consequence than a knowledge of His *method* therein, though that is not without interest and importance. The Bible is the Word of God, because it was composed by His immediate assistance; and because everything in it was inserted by His special direction, so that its instruments could aver, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1Co 2:13). “Divine inspiration is the mysterious power put forth by the Spirit of God on the authors of Holy Writ, to make them write it, to guide them even in the employment of the words they use, and thus to preserve them from all error”—François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863).

Our knowledge of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as of every other doctrine of the Bible, must be collected from itself. That the Holy Spirit spoke through and wrote by men is a fact explicitly attested by Scripture, but how He influenced them is not fully revealed. As the author of that remarkable book, *Theopneustia*, well reminds us, it is “with a faith quite of the same kind that we receive the doctrine of the new birth and sanctification of a soul by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Spirit enlightens the soul, cleanses it, raises it, comforts it, softens it. We perceive all these effects: we admire and we adore; but we have found it our duty to be content never to know the means by which this is done. Be it the same, then, with regard to divine inspiration.” Yet it is equally our duty and privilege to spare no pains in ascertaining all that God *has been* pleased to tell us thereon. The writers of the Old and New Testament alike claim to speak in the name of God, and to have received their messages from Him. According to their own testimony, the Scriptures affirm that they are a communication from heaven.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2Ti 3:16). Here we have the fact plainly stated, and its unlimited scope declared. But we must first dispose of the sad tampering with and perversion of it by our moderns. The Revised Version has altered it to “every Scripture inspired of God

is also profitable for teaching”; thereby changing a specific statement into a general proposition, which neither avouches the inspiration of the Scriptures (but leaves the question undecided), nor declares which books are inspired—a proposition as indefinite and superfluous, as it would be to say that the sun gives light. In the previous verse, the apostle had made reference to the Old Testament Scriptures and stated that they were “able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15), and then made known *why* they were so. As the scholarly Professor John Dick (1764-1833) pointed out, “It is a mistranslation. The conjunction ‘and’ which connects ‘God-inspired’ and ‘profitable’ clearly shows that both adjectives belong to the predicate of the proposition, and that ‘every scripture’ alone is the subject. No example can be produced where two adjectives are thus joined, of which the one belongs to the subject, and the other to the predicate. Had Paul meant to express the idea which these critics attach to his words, he would have left out the conjunction.”

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Our second remark (for the benefit of young preachers) is that this authoritative affirmation at once excludes the Apocrypha, which was formerly bound up with the Old Testament, and to which the Papists appeal in support of some of their erroneous dogmas. All its books were composed after the cessation of the prophetic spirit in the days of Malachi (1Macc 9:27; 14:41). They were not written in the Hebrew language, in which all the books of the Old Testament were originally penned—with the exception of a few passages in Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Esther, which were in the Chaldee. Neither Philo nor Josephus, who lived in the first century of this Christian era, makes any reference thereto; nor were those spurious books given any place in the Septuagint version, as made by the translators of the Old Testament under Ptolemy. And, what is far more significant, they never received the attestation of the Lord Jesus and His apostles—neither the One nor the other ever alluding to them. Nor does one of its writers, in direct terms, advance any claim to divine inspiration. Instead, its last one closes by saying, “If I have written well and to the point in my story, this is what I myself desired; but if meanly and indifferently, this is all I could attain unto” (2Macc 15:38). How utterly profane to suppose for a moment that this is the Holy Spirit’s indicting!

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This specific and comprehensive assertion is made not of the messengers, but of their messages. A “scripture” is a *writing*, made up of letters and words; “inspiration” means *breathing into*. The writing of the page under the hand of Moses or Paul was as truly breathed on and into that page by God as He breathed into Adam his soul (Gen 2:7). Inspiration is therefore entirely different from illumination, not only in degree, but in kind. Spiritual illumination is an ordinary and general operation of the Spirit upon all believers; inspiration was an extraordinary and peculiar work in which God communicated His truth in a unique and miraculous manner. It is most important to observe that 2 Timothy 3:16 says nothing of the writers, but is predicated of their *writings*; and that it includes all of them. Thus, it cannot mean one thing of Genesis, another of Chronicles, and yet another of the Psalms. Each and all were alike inspired of God—not simply the sentiments uttered or the ideas expressed, but the very expressions too. “What is *written*?” asked Christ. “How readeest thou?” (Luk 10:26). Each time He personally repulsed the devil’s assaults with an “It is written”!

“This statement admits of no exception and of no restriction. Here, there is no exception: it is ‘all scripture’; it is all that is written: meaning, thereby, the thoughts after they had received the stamp of language. No restriction: ‘all scripture’ is in such wise a work of God, that it is represented to us as uttered by the divine breathing, just as human speech is uttered by the breathing of a man’s mouth. The prophet is the mouth of the Lord”—F. Gaussen. What concerns us, then, is the actual *words recorded*, and not the men who wrote them. So far were the prophecies from being conceived by the prophets themselves, that they often transcended their own comprehension. See an example of that in the one who was, in some senses, the most remarkable of them. Daniel tells us that he was completely overcome (“fainted”) and “*astonished* at the vision” (Dan 8:27), that “I heard, but I understood not” (Dan 12:8). “Of which salvation the prophets have *enquired* and searched diligently” (1Pe 1:10). “What picture can be more impressive than that of the prophet himself hanging over and contemplating in amazement his own autograph—as if it had been left upon the table there, the relic of some strange and supernatural Hand!”—G. S. Bishop.

Nor is this dogmatic and sweeping declaration of 2 Timothy 3:16 to be limited unto the Old Testament; though admittedly, the first reference is thereunto, as the previous verse indicates. While we should inevitably conclude that since the New Testament is in no wise inferior to the Old, it too must be divinely inspired: we are not left to draw inferences of our own, however logical and irresistible. We do not have to go any farther than the two epistles of Timothy in order to find that this “all scripture” certainly includes more than the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, we read, “Let the elders that rule well be counted wor-

thy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For *the scripture* saith, [1] Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. [2] And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." Two "proof texts" are there quoted, and *both* are affirmed to be "the scripture." The first is quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4, but the second is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament! Instead, it is taken from Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, proving that the Gospels are also inspired of God, and are of equal authenticity and authority as the Old Testament! Also, 2 Peter 3:15-16 clearly establishes the fact that all of Paul's epistles were divinely inspired (as is proved by the "*also the other scriptures*"), and 2 Peter 2:13 does the same for the epistles of the other apostles.

Now let us take the complete statement: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [or "complete"], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:16-17). Thus, not only are all Scriptures of God's inbreathing communicated immediately from Himself, but they are all that our souls stand in need of—an infallible rule of faith and practice. We require not to go outside of them for any moral or spiritual instruction or food. They are all-sufficient for us. They never become outdated—for they are the Word of Him who changeth not (Heb 13:8). It will be observed that the Holy Spirit has summarized here—under four heads—the various things for which the Scriptures are profitable, which led an old writer quaintly to say, "Thus the Scriptures are like that river which watered Eden, and from thence it was parted, and 'became into *four heads*'" (Gen 2:10). First, "doctrine," to establish us in the truth. Second, "reproof," to remove error. Third, "correction" of all ill manners. Fourth, "instruction in righteousness," to build us up in holiness of character and conduct. All of them combined, to fit and furnish us for "every good work." What but the pen of inspiration could say so much in so few words!

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" (2Pe 1:18-19). The comparison there drawn is between the audible testimony of the Father unto His Son in the hearing of the three apostles at the time of His transfiguration, and that revelation of God's which we now have in this dark world. The latter is "more sure" than the former: not in itself, but in its *form*—theirs was speedily lost in the air; ours has been placed on permanent and imperishable record. Then the passage goes on to say, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2Pe 1:20), which is quite an unhappy and misleading rendition—for the verse is not treating of the *meaning* of the Scriptures, but their *source*, as the next and explanatory verse proves. The Greek word is never translated "private" elsewhere, but seventy-two times, "his own." The word for "interpretation" is quite different from that found in John 1:42, etc., and is defined in Young's concordance as "unloosing"; it is not found again in the New Testament; and its simple form occurs only in 1 Corinthians 7:27, where it is rendered "to be loosed." Thus, 2 Peter 1:20 signifies, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [*human origination*]."

This statement that "We have also a more sure word" (2Pe 1:19) is indeed a weighty one, especially when the comparison is duly noted. Christians have something more acceptable and reliable than a messenger from the dead (Luk 16:31); yea, than if God Himself dealt with them by personal and audible revelations, for such might easily be mistaken and soon forgotten; whereas we have as an authentic, intelligible, and abiding communication of God's mind and will. Samuel thought that it was Eli who called to him, when it was the LORD (1Sa 3:1-10). Even when God spake to Peter by vision, and that, three times over, he still "doubted in himself" (Act 10:17). From those cases, we are shown that, while every declaration of God's be alike trustworthy in itself, they are not so to the recipients thereof. A far more certain ground to rest faith upon is ours; and for it, we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Said Martin Luther (1483-1546), "I indented with the LORD my God that He would never send me dreams and visions; I am well content with the gift of the Scriptures." And well may *we* be so: "Knowing this: that no Scripture is of human origination," but instead, of divine revelation.

