

KNOCKING AT CANAAN'S DOOR

(Numbers chapters twenty-seven through thirty-six)

The Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1 – 11)

With the death of older generation the promise God had made concerning their children is about to be fulfilled. Now the Israelites are beginning to believe they are really about to arrive 'home' at last. The five daughters of Zelophehad illustrate the eager anticipation of at least some of the congregation. They do not have their eyes on their current plight. They are not complaining about having only "this manna" to eat, or grumbling about other things, as the Israelites were in the habit of doing. Instead, their minds are now occupied with what is in store for them on the other side of the Jordan. They now have their eyes on their inheritance in the land that is before them.

In much the same way, when we really believe that the coming of the Lord is drawing near we will, even more than those to whom Paul addressed his letters nearly two thousand years ago, have our minds set "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). Our inheritance is not here, but in glory! As the hymn writer put it, "This world, this world, is not my home!"

However there is a problem about their coming inheritance. The land was to be divided among the men and their sons. The sisters face the problem that their father has died and he had no sons. He probably had been a part of the rebellion at Kadesh, but he had not been involved with the insurrection of Korah. Is his part in the land to be lost? Are the women to have no inheritance? God assures them that even though their father has died and had no sons, He will graciously provide a place for his family in the Land of Promise – the inheritance will go to his five daughters. (Five is the number of grace!)

As we have seen, Israel was a male dominated society. The genealogies were always through the fathers and their sons – except in passages prophetic of Christ, who would have no earthly father. See Gen. 3:15; Psa. 69:8; Jer. 31:22 where Christ's human ancestry is in view.

However, as His provision for the daughters of Zelophehad illustrates, God was not unconcerned about the women in Israel. There were times when godly women who came on the scene were greatly used by Him and given a place of honor in His word. We read of Sarah, Jael, Ruth, Esther, Lydia, Priscilla, Martha and her sister, Mary - to name but a few. Five women (the number of grace again) are named, or referred to, in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew's Gospel. To crown all, the only physical link of Christ to the human race was through a woman, for He had no human father. God did not discriminate against Zelophehad's daughters because they were women. Instead, they were assured they would inherit the land that would have been their father's, just as if they had been his sons. Today believing women are "sons" of God and are, equally with the men, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7).

The Transfer of Leadership (Numbers 27:12 – 23)

The time has come for entering the land, but both Moses and Aaron have been sentenced to die in the wilderness. Aaron has already died, now it is time for Moses also to be gathered to his fathers. How precious Moses must have been to God! He had faithfully led His people for forty long and stressful years. He had, in godly meekness, selflessly interceded for them time after time. He was a man of great faith (Heb. 11:24 – 29). Did God recall these things, quash the indictment against him, and lovingly allow him to lead His people this one last time as they entered the Promised Land? No, his single rebellion at Meribah in the wilderness of Zin was not just swept under the rug. As much as God must have loved Moses, His holiness decreed that his sin must not go unpunished!

A similar, but infinitely greater, demonstration of God's unswerving dedication to perfect holiness is seen at Calvary. There God poured out his wrath against sin upon His own Son when the sins of the whole world had been laid upon Him, when He had even been made to be sin for us. Those who think God will wink at their sin and, like a doting grandfather busy spoiling his grandson, lovingly allow them to slip, unsaved, into His presence, are in for a shock! If God were ever to allow sin to go unpunished it would have been when it was His own beloved Son who was involved – particularly since it was not *His* sin! No one will ever find himself in heaven because God, swayed only by His love, has allowed his sins to go unpunished. Those who will be in heaven will be there because Christ, to satisfy His holiness, graciously took their punishment upon Himself at Calvary. Christ's death has fully met the just demands of the holiness of God, setting His love free to receive us into His presence without compromising His righteousness. Thus it is not "by love," but "by *grace*" that we are saved (Eph. 2:8).¹ This is the secure basis upon which our salvation rests. Paul had this in mind when he declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.... For in it [not only the grace, but] the *righteousness* of God is revealed -" (Rom. 1:16. 17).

God's *grace* toward Moses is also clearly demonstrated in this chapter of Numbers. He could not righteously permit him to lead His people into the land – but He did graciously allow him to see it before he died. Even that does not fully tell out the riches of His grace toward Moses. Centuries later, when Christ was transfigured, he was at His side along with Elijah. The "high mountain" where the transfiguration took place may not have been 'in the land,' west of the Jordan, but what a place of honor it was for him! He had evidently been raised from the dead by that time, for he was present on the same basis as Elijah – and Elijah was there bodily, for he is physically alive, even to this day.

It is likely, if not certain, that a premature release of Moses from death and his passage, bodily, into heaven, is what Satan objected to in Jude nine. "Michael the archangel ... [contended] with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses." When the body of Moses was given life (before the resurrection of other Old Testament

¹ Grace, as it has to do with salvation, is God finding, in Himself alone, the righteous basis (redemption) for doing what His love longs to do concerning sinful man.

saints) and taken through Satan's territory there was a dispute. When the Body of Christ will be given life (also before the resurrection of the Old Testament saints), and taken through Satan's domain at the Rapture, there will surely be more than a mere objection from the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Perhaps one reason Christ has for meeting us in the air is to give us 'safe conduct' home through Satan's hosts of demons and fallen angels.

Moses will again appear upon the scene during the Tribulation. The sixth verse of Revelation eleven surely argues strongly that he is the second witness in the passage. The two witnesses will "have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire" (Rev. 11:6). There, as at the transfiguration, "the law and the prophets" will be represented by the lawgiver himself, and one of the outstanding prophets of the Old Testament. At that time Moses will have arrived in the land at last, for after he has been slain as a martyr² his body will be left lying in the street of Jerusalem - where he evidently had been ministering (Rev. 11:7, 8). Surely Moses and Elijah are the ones who have been chosen by God to stand at Christ's right hand and His left hand in the kingdom (Matt. 20:21, 23).

Something Peter said later indicates this. When he recalled the transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah were the ones talking with Christ, he testified that what he had seen there was "the power and coming [coming in glory] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16). The transfiguration was a little prophetic vignette of Christ's coming to set up His kingdom - that kingdom where one will sit on His right hand and another on His left.

There is an interesting contrast between the response of Moses, and that of another prominent leader of Israel, when they were informed by God of their coming deaths. When king Hezekiah was told that he would soon die his concerns were all for himself. "Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 'Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly" (2 Kings 20:2, 3). God graciously responded by extending his life for fifteen years. It was during those years, however, that his son, Manasseh, was born.³ Manasseh became the most wicked king Judah ever had, and his sins were directly responsible for the judgment that befell Judah later (2 Kings 23:26). If Hezekiah had accepted God's time for his death there would never have been a Manasseh to plunge Judah into ruin!

When God told Moses of his coming death his first response was understandable. "I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon" (Deut. 3:25). But, when God said "No," he did not, as

² If it is objected that in this case Moses will have died twice, when Scripture says it is appointed to man to die once (Heb. 9:27), it must be remembered that those raised from the dead by Christ during His ministry certainly died again later. A resurrection of Moses in the past would be, as theirs was, a simple restoration of life (possible even for one whose body has already begun to decay - John 11:39), not the final resurrection with an immortal body.

³ Manasseh was only twelve years old when his father died (2 Kings 20:21; 21:1).

Hezekiah did later, continue to plead his case with bitter tears. His major concern was not for himself, but for God's people who would be left behind. "Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: 'Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd'" (Num. 27:15 – 17). He accepted God's decision in the matter and, it seems, was raised from the dead that He might, in the future, have a glorious ministry - and a place at the side of the King of kings during the Millennium. Though not expressed in words, "Thy will be done" was the heart of the prayers of Moses - and it should be a constant and vital part of our prayers as well. How much better it would have been for Israel if Hezekiah had also prayed, "Thy will be done"!

Joshua was God's choice for a successor to Moses. He had already led the Israelites in their battle against Amalek (Ex. 17:8 – 13), proved himself at Kadesh-barnea, and had been closely associated with Moses on other occasions. He was to have a brief 'internship' under Moses when "*some* of [Moses'] authority" would be put on him shortly before Moses died (Num. 27:20).

Joshua was, in some respects, typical of Christ (even bearing the Old Testament form of the name "Jesus"). He took Israel into the land, which Moses was not allowed to do. Similarly, Christ accomplished what the Law of Moses could not do. "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Historically, however, Joshua was not 'another Moses.' The dispensation of law, introduced by Moses, continued – but there were some significant changes within that dispensation. When Moses died he had completed the body of truth that would be the guiding light and 'constitution' for the coming generations. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (Deut. 12:32).⁴

There are three places that speak of a completion of Scripture. Moses completed the revelation of the law. There was a great deal of revelation later concerning how Israel lived under that law, and concerning things to come. But never, in the rest of the Old Testament, is anything revealed that added to or deleted from the "Law of Moses," for those living under it.

Paul was given the task of completing that portion of the word of God that has to do specifically with this age of grace. He told the Colossians, "The stewardship from

⁴ The Mormons use this passage to justify their contention that there are to be further prophecies after the warning given in Rev. 22:18. They fail to see that Moses spoke of another prophet to follow him (Deut. 18:15). John makes no such statement concerning the completion of the New Testament.

God ... was given to me for you, to [complete]⁵ the word of God, *the mystery* which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but *now has been revealed* [in Paul's writings] to His saints" (Col. 1:25, 26). When Paul laid down his pen the body of truth (the "word of God") dealing specifically with this age of grace was complete.

To the apostle John was given the honor of completing the Bible as a whole. "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18, 19).

As noted before, when Moses died the dispensation did not change, but there were changes within it. They no longer had the miraculous provision of daily food. "Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. 5:12). The pillar of fire by night and cloud by day was withdrawn. Now it was necessary for Joshua to look to the High Priest for the kind of guidance the cloud had provided. "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. *At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in*, he and all the children of Israel with him; all the congregation" (Num. 27:21).

True, it is said at least fourteen times in the book of Joshua, "The Lord said unto Joshua" – or the equivalent. However his relationship to the High Priest was not the same as the relationship that existed between Moses and Aaron. Eleazar was to inquire before the Lord, at times at least, for Joshua, but Aaron never inquired before the Lord for Moses. Moses received his instructions directly from the Lord. God had, earlier, reminded Miriam and Aaron, "I speak with him [Moses] face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Num. 12:8). Aaron was not Moses' source of truth, as Eleazar was to be, to some degree at least, for Joshua. Moses received God's messages by direct "face to face" revelation. Aaron was but a mouthpiece for Moses, to communicate that truth to the people. The relationship between the two brothers had been clearly defined when they received their call to service. God told Moses, "He [Aaron] shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God" (Ex. 4:16).

Just as there were changes within the dispensation of law shortly following the completion of the revelation given through Moses, there were changes within the dispensation of grace upon the completion of the revelation entrusted to the apostle Paul. For a time there had to be those in the church who would receive, directly from God, at least some of the truths later written down for us in Paul's epistles. However Paul warned the believers at Corinth that this gift of prophecy would not continue in the

⁵ The Greek word used here is usually translated "fill" or "fulfill," but it seems to have the idea of completion even then. It is actually translated "complete" twice in Colossians (Col. 2:10 and 4:12).

church. “But whether there are prophecies, they will fail” (1 Cor. 13:8). The prophecies were not to fail in the sense that the things prophesied would fail to take place. The gift itself was to be withdrawn. “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect [complete] has come, then that which is in part will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:9, 10). Notice that the perfection in verse ten is not in contrast to that which is *inferior*, or *defective*, but in contrast to that which is *incomplete* (v. 9).

When the transition period (covered in Acts chapters 9 through 28) was over and the revelation concerning this age of grace was complete, and in the hands of the church, the supernatural gift of prophecy was no longer needed – and was withdrawn. But, after the transition was largely past, Paul lists prophets as gifts to the church. “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11, 12). Why are there to be prophets in the church at this late date when the gift of prophecy was to be withdrawn?

It is important to see that there is a difference between those prophets who were given the responsibility of writing the New Testament Scriptures (and those temporarily possessing the supernatural gift of prophecy) on the one hand, and the “prophets” in the church today on the other. Those receiving their message direct from God were fore-tellers, while we, giving out what God has already revealed, are forth-tellers.⁶ The “prophet” today does not experience either revelation or inspiration. It is the work of the Spirit in illuminating what has already been revealed, and written down by inspiration, that constitutes him a “prophet.” He is not to be a fore-teller, but a forth-teller of God’s message. Moses was a prophet⁷ in the miraculous sense. He was a fore-teller. Aaron was not. He may be considered a prophet in the non-miraculous sense however. He was a forth-teller of what had been revealed to Moses.

We can, as we study the word of God, in non-miraculous ‘prophesying,’ give out the truths revealed there. We can even teach prophecy, but we must be careful we do not try – in the miraculous sense - to prophesy.

Further Instructions (Numbers chapters twenty-eight through thirty)

Concerning offerings (Numbers chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine)

Without a detailed analysis of the instructions given by Moses in these two chapters there are precious truths we can glean from the typology inherent in the passage. Christ is in view all through the two chapters. After a short introduction to the section, in the first two verses, the “continual burnt offering” is introduced in verses three through

⁶ Putting Ephesians 4:11, 12 into our present terminology, it appears to be saying that God gave to the church missionaries (sent ones – “apostles”), Bible teachers (to speak in seminars, teach in seminaries, etc. – “prophets”), and local evangelists and teaching pastors.

⁷ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” (Deut. 18:15).

eight. The primacy of the continual burnt offering is quite apparent. It was offered morning and evening of every day, and it was not to be replaced by the other offerings. Sixteen times in these two chapters the other offerings are “besides” or “in addition to” the continual burnt offering

This offering has nothing to do with the sins of men, as do the “sin offering,” the “trespass offering,” the offerings on the “Day of Atonement,” etc. In the continual burnt offering the cross is portrayed as the offering up of Christ in loving obedience to the Father. Perhaps the primary incentive leading Christ to Calvary was not to save sinful men – as vital and gracious as this was - but to please His Father. Important as the other offerings were, the one that displayed Christ’s obedience to His Father’s will was the primary one, the only one offered twice a day every day.

This supreme motivation in submitting to death is revealed in Hebrews ten. “When He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, “Behold, *I have come*; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; *To do Your will, O God*’” (Heb. 10:5 – 7). His loving obedience, from a heart that shared the same gracious concern for men that the Father cherished, led Him to Calvary. “By [His submission to] that will [of the Father] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:10, 14).

If not one sinner ever believed the gospel, and the entire race ended up in a well-deserved hell, His sacrifice would not have been in vain. He has honored the Father by doing, from the heart, His will. Also the Father stands exonerated of blame for the lost condition of mankind, for they have been provided, at infinite cost, with a way to be saved.

This consideration is important in theology, for two views that seem equally false, to this author, are based on the assumption that *everyone* for whom Christ died *must* be saved. Otherwise, they argue, Christ’s death would, in the case of the lost, have been in vain. The Universalist takes this view and draws the conclusion that, since Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:15) all must be saved. The ultra-Calvinist takes the same view but draws a different conclusion. He reasons, “Since all for whom Christ died will be saved, and since – obviously – not all men will be saved, He must have died only for the *elect* sinners.” Actually, the ultra-Calvinist is a kind of Universalist also. He just redefines the “world” in John 3:16 and the “all” in 2 Cor. 5:15 and 1 Tim. 2:4. “The *elect* world” and “all the *elect*” fit his theology better.

Paul touches on this subject in Corinthians. His argument in 2 Cor. 5:14 and 15 may be put this way, “The fact that Christ died for *all* [not just for the elect] proves that *all* died in Adam, therefore all need His provision. But His death, though for all, is only effective for ‘those who live’ [verse 15]. Christ died for *all* [universal provision] that *those who live* [limited acquisition] should ... live ... for Him.” The universal provision -

the love of Christ for all - constrains us to be concerned for all. The limited acquisition - the need for faith - constrains us to preach to them, to “persuade men” (verse. 11).

Another lesson we gain from these two chapters is that all of the offerings were to be a “sweet aroma” to the Lord. The continual burnt offering was a sweet aroma (28:8), but so were the others. The expression “sweet aroma” is found eleven times in these two chapters. Our sin made it necessary for God to “forsake” Christ as He hung suspended between heaven and earth – as though rejected by both. However the Father was “well pleased” with His Son when He was dying on the cross (Isa. 53:11, 12) as surely as when He was carrying out His ministry (Matt. 17:5).

The typology here, as in many other places in Scripture, reminds us that Christ was without any sin of His own when He was made to be sin for us. Nine times in these chapters it is stipulated that the offerings are to be “without blemish.” This seeming paradox of a sinless Christ being judged for sin is clarified for us in Second Corinthians. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Or, as it is put elsewhere, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

There is a wonderful truth embedded in the eight days of offerings related in Numbers 29:12 – 38. Each day, for seven days, two rams and fourteen lambs were offered. Along with these some bulls were to be offered also. The number of bulls was decreased by one each day – from thirteen on the first day to seven on the seventh day. It is as though the number of bulls offered was a ‘countdown’ to something very important. The number eight speaks of a new beginning, and on the eighth day only one bull, one ram and seven lambs were offered (Num. 28:35, 36).

From Leviticus 16:29 we learn that the tenth day of the seventh month (Num. 29:7) was the Day of Atonement. Here, only five days later – on the fifteenth day of that month (Num. 29:12) - began the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34). It was then that the countdown began. After seven days of feasting the eighth day was a special day, a holy convocation.

The Day of Atonement typifies the salvation of all Israel. This should have taken place when their Messiah gave His life for them. God knew, however, that they would reject Him instead. He knew it would not be until later, at the return of Christ, that Israel would enter into the redemption accomplished for them on that day. The time prophecy in Daniel 9:25 – 27 recognizes this. The five days between the Day of Atonement and the beginning of the countdown seem to point to the graciousness of God as He ‘stopped the clock’ of Daniel nine, after only sixty-nine “weeks” had expired. This suspension of the time schedule was introduced by God to give Israel time to decide how to respond to the offer made to them by Peter in Acts 3:19 – 21. This period between the Day of Atonement and the countdown was five days – for five is the number of grace.

The seven days of the countdown may reflect the seven years (after the clock has started ticking off the time again) between the cross and the crown indicated in Daniel 9:26, 27. During those seven years Israel will be going through great tribulation, but the faithful among them can be rejoicing (if they understand and believe the prophecy of Daniel) in the expectation that the kingdom will follow at the close of those seven years. It will be a countdown to glory for them.

The holy convocation of the eighth day pictures the arrival of that long awaited kingdom. On that eighth day there was to be no "laborious work" (Num. 29:35 – NASB), for the kingdom will not come as a result of any work of man. The number of bulls and rams was dropped to one each on that eighth day, to typify the once for all sacrifice of Christ making the kingdom possible. The number of lambs was dropped to seven typifying the completion and perfection of what Christ has done to establish it. This convocation not only concluded the Feast of Tabernacles, but also was the last and crowning day of the last feast of Israel each year. It signifies the glorious conclusion of God's program with Israel, a program that has spanned many centuries, and will bring them at last to the long anticipated "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19). What a day of rejoicing that will be!

There is no revelation as to when Christ will come for us. We do not have a time oriented countdown to the Rapture. Instead we have the blessed hope that Christ could, and might, come **today! Maranatha!**

Concerning vows (Numbers chapter thirty)

There are some principles in this short chapter that may well be applied today, even though the application of them here is to Israel under the law.

A man should keep his word, even when he has not formally sworn an oath to bind himself. "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; *he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth*" (Num. 30:2). Jephthah found out how tragic and painful this can be (Judges 11:30 – 35). "Better not to vow than to vow and not pay" (Ecc. 5:5). We are to keep our 'vow' to give our bodies a living sacrifice, but also we are to speak the truth with our neighbors (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:25).

In keeping with the woman's role of dependence on her husband she is given a 'way out' if she makes an unwise or foolish vow. The husband can protect her from it if he speaks up at once (Num. 30:12).

The responsibility of the parent over the child (here a female child) is only as long as she is in her youth and in her father's house (Num. 30:16).

If there is an objection to a vow taken by a woman, it must be made at once or it is not valid (Num. 30:4, 11, 14). The rule is, "Speak now, or forever after hold your peace." Silence is construed as consent.

The husband who does not respond to the vow of his wife is responsible for her guilt (Num. 30:14, 15).

There is symbolic significance in the contents of this chapter as it portrays the relationship of Israel to the Lord. Israel was looked upon as the “wife of Jehovah” in many Old Testament passages. We discover the time when this relationship was formalized through a prophecy of Ezekiel. “‘I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful ... When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; ... so I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,’ says the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 16:7, 8).

At that time the newly espoused wife of Jehovah made a vow. “Then all the people answered together and said, ‘*All that the LORD has spoken we will do*’” (Ex. 19:8). They failed to realize that “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). God knew this but He did not overrule their vow when it was made. Later He made their vow void, for he both proclaimed and demonstrated their complete inability to keep it. As a result (that He had both anticipated and welcomed) He bore their guilt on Calvary. “Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard them. But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then *he shall bear her guilt*” (Num. 30:14, 15). Praise the Lord He also bore our guilt even though we were not involved with Israel’s vow.

The Slaughter of Midian (Numbers chapter thirty-one)

To understand this chapter we must recall briefly the story of Balaam and Balak. Balak had been terror stricken by the approach of Israel. They were a massive army, and word had no doubt reached them of the way their God had been with them for the past forty years. He shrewdly reasoned that only if their Protector could be turned against them could they be defeated. So he hired Balaam to influence Israel’s God to curse them. When the attempt failed and Balaam was forced to bless them instead, another plan was put into action. At Balaam’s instigation the women of Midian seduced the men of Israel and led them into worshipping their gods.⁸ The scheme worked to a point, for 20,000 Israelites died without the Midianites raising a sword.

As to their *standing* before God (as Balaam had prophesied) He had not beheld iniquity in their ranks. However, in their *state* before men God was faithful to administer chastening. Let us never think for a moment that, because we have the imputed righteousness of God by faith, we can sin with impunity

While His people endured chastening, those who led them into their sin experienced judgement. Barak and his allies could not only have escaped this judgment - they could have been blessed instead – if they had only seized upon one of the prophecies of Balaam. “Blessed is he who blesses you [Israel],” he had proclaimed. Instead they gathered the other side of this prophecy to their breasts in blind unbelief and pursued

⁸ The relative blame resting on Balak, the Moabites, and the Midianites has been addressed earlier in connection with chapter twenty-five.

their hatred of Israel to the limit. “Cursed is he who curses you [Israel]” was the pronouncement of their doom. In seeking to enlist God to curse His own people they were cursed themselves, incurring His wrath. A similar choice is set before men today, but the touchstone of faith is not, now, concern for Israel (much as we should be concerned for her) but faith in Christ as Savior from sin. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

The last ‘official’ responsibility of Moses was to deal with the Midianites. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people’” (Num. 31:1, 2). Although Joshua had already been installed as the new leader of Israel, he is not even mentioned in this chapter. It is “Moses and Eleazar the priest” who take charge (Num. 31:6, 12, 13, 26, 31, 41, 51, 54). Very possibly Joshua may have led the army, but the only one mentioned by name who went out to battle was “Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest.” Although swords were surely used in the battle, Phinehas accompanied them “with [only] the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand” (Num. 31:6).

Moses was still their leader, for this was to be the military capstone of that leadership. He had led them for forty years and had brought them to the Jordan opposite Jericho. He was not to leave any unfinished business behind him east of the river. Eleazar shared the leadership because this battle was on religious grounds. Balak and Balaam had come against Israel with an attack in the spiritual realm. Phinehas was there partly because it was his zeal for the Lord that had terminated the plague God had brought against Israel when they had sinned at Peor. Mention of what he took into battle with him is at least suggestive of the fact that our warfare, even more decidedly than with Israel's, is a spiritual warfare. Fittingly, our weapons are – as were the ‘weapons’ Phinehas carried with him – fitted to that kind of battle. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:12, 13). “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:3, 4).

All of the males in Midian (the adults - the present danger, and the boys - the threat of danger in the future) were slain. When the women were spared Moses was angry. “And Moses said to them: ‘Have you kept all the women alive? Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD’” (Num. 31:15, 16). The girls who were virgins – and could not have taken part in the seduction of the men of Israel – were spared. The rest were slain.

During this battle God gave Balaam the answer to his perfidy. He was killed with the sword.

This signal victory is significant for several reasons. It not only avenged a great wrong, it also secured the land east of the Jordan from attack later, when the soldiers of two and a half tribes crossed the Jordan with the rest of the army leaving their families behind – largely defenseless. In addition, it was God's answer to the fears that had led to the fiasco at Kadesh-barnea. They saw what God could do! In a battle involving thousands of soldiers on each side, the victory was complete and without the loss of a single man! (Num. 31:49). This not only demonstrated to them that their fears at Kadesh had been groundless, it was also a strong encouragement for their troops as they faced the battles just ahead of them across the river.

When our spiritual battle is over, in spite of many hardships and seeming defeats in local skirmishes, Christ will wear the victor's crown, and He will not have lost a single soldier! We will even share in the 'spoils.' Christ has already defeated Satan at the cross and the empty tomb. The war is already won.

His be the Victor's name Who fought our fight alone:
 Triumphant saints no honor claim, Their conquest was His own.
 By weakness and defeat He won the meed and crown,
 Trod all our foes beneath His feet, By being trodden down.
 He hell in hell laid low; Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;
 Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so, And death, by dying, slew. ⁹

May we rejoice that, however fiercely the conflict rages, we are only carrying out 'mopping up operations'! We are on the winning side!

The 'Dropouts' (Numbers chapter thirty-two)

A most unexpected and disturbing development occurred just before God's people, at long last, entered the Promised Land. Thirty-eight years before, the entire congregation had turned back from entering it because they feared the giants and a "land that devours its inhabitants." Here two and a half tribes (about 20% of the nation) turned back again at the very last minute. This time it was not because they feared the land or its inhabitants, for they willingly sent their armies across the Jordan with their brethren. It was because they preferred to choose their home for themselves instead of accepting God's choice for them. Before, they had *turned back* - longing for Egypt. This time they failed to *go ahead* - satisfied with a relatively attractive area in the wilderness.

The home they chose for themselves was to be in what they considered an acceptable part of the wilderness. Whether they realized it or not, however, they would no longer have the manna to feed them, the cloud to shelter them, or the leadership of either Moses or Joshua. They had their eyes only on good pasture for the wealth of livestock God had granted to them. What had happened to their longing for the milk and honey, their expectation of living in the land promised to them by the Lord, the land to which He had patiently led them for the past forty years?

⁹ The Believer's Hymn Book, Pickering and Inglis, London, England. Hymn number 93.

How often wealth has kept men from God's best – all too often kept them from even knowing God at all! The rich young ruler “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Matt. 19:22). “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” the disciples were told when the young man had departed (Luke 18:24). What a contrast exists between those who allow riches – or the love of riches – to keep them from God's best and those who, living on the right side of their Jordan, take joyfully even the spoiling of their goods!

This decision was not the will of God for them, though He allowed them to have their way. Several things indicate this. When Moses sent a message to Sihon king of Heshbon, he made a peaceful proposal. “You shall sell me food for money ... and give me water for money ... until I *cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us*” (Deut. 2:28, 29). In Numbers 34:10 – 12 the eastern border of the land they are to inherit, and divide among them, is the Jordan River from the Sea of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) to the Salt Sea (The Dead Sea). Also, if it had been God's will for them to live east of the river surely Moses would have known about it. Instead it came as an unwelcome surprise to him, and it angered him. It must have seemed incredible to Moses that, while he grieved over his own exclusion from the land, these who could enter it would choose not to do so.

Sadly, the river became a dividing line to cut them off, to a degree, from the rest of the tribes. Only a short time later it almost caused a civil war (Joshua 22:10 – 12)! By that time the separation was already a part of their thinking. The tribes in the land registered a strong protest against the eastern bloc. “Thus says *the whole congregation of the LORD*: ‘What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD?’” (Joshua 22:16). How could the nine and a half tribes in the land consider themselves “the whole congregation of the Lord” if they had not come to look upon the rest of the tribes as outsiders? The ‘easterners’ themselves evidently feared just such a division, for they had built a replica of the bronze altar on their side of the river to remind them that they were still a part of Israel (Joshua 22:24, 25).

It is worthy of notice that when Deborah listed those who had responded to her call for help against the Canaanites she admitted that Reuben had had “great resolves of heart” but added that they had not done anything about it. They had remained by their sheepfolds (Judges 5:15, 16). Also neither Gad nor the half tribe of Manasseh were even mentioned. Being across the Jordan, they seemed to think the war was not their concern.

Tragically and significantly, those who did not enter the land were the first ones to be taken into captivity. “In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel *from the Jordan eastward*: all the land of Gilead; *Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh*” (2 Kings 10:32, 33).

We should be warned against stopping short of God's best for us also. We must not be like the defectors of Israel who were satisfied to be still in the wilderness – just as long as they were out of Egypt.

Many, perhaps most, of the Corinthians had become 'dropouts.' They were saved, for Paul addressed them as "saints," but they had stopped short of enjoying the spiritual blessings Christ had purchased for them at Calvary. Not yielding their bodies as living sacrifices; failing to account themselves dead to sin but alive to God; neglecting to feed on His word that they might grow thereby – they were still babes when, considering the time they had been saved, they should have been full grown in the Lord. They had elected to remain east of their 'Jordan,' satisfied with the emotional high of speaking in tongues. They were content to contend with one another instead of contending for the faith. They were glorying in human leaders instead of glorying in the Lord. As a result the letters addressed to them, though containing a great deal of vital teaching, were heavily weighted with rebuke. They were not yet ready for the meat of the word. They had to be fed with milk (1 Cor. 3:1 – 4). They were saints – but how poverty stricken they were in the things of God! What a tragedy it is to be satisfied with salvation from hell and fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. May we not fail to cross our 'Jordan' – may we not become spiritual 'dropouts'!

God had given the entire land to Israel in the days of Abraham, but they had to 'possess their possessions' before they could claim them. "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" was God's message to Joshua (Joshua 1:3). The two and a half tribes did not set foot on a single acre of land in Canaan – as a place where they intended to live. As a result the land that was intended for them was never their home. God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), but we, too, must possess our possessions. They are ours, but we must claim them by faith if we are to enjoy them. Let us not be content to settle down in complacency on the eastern side of our 'Jordan'!

Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh did not escape warfare by their decision not to enter the land. Not only did their armies cross the Jordan to fight along side their brethren, they also (to obtain homes for their families) engaged in a few skirmishes of their own before crossing the river (Num. 32:39 – 42). While their families were able to settle down to permanent homes before those of the other tribes, they were left, humanly speaking, defenseless while their men were fighting across the Jordan.

We must give the dropouts credit however – they did not take up residence east of the river until they had wangled permission from God to do so. Later they faithfully lived up to the bargain they had made, and sent their men across the Jordan to fight for the land. But, in a physical application of a spiritual principle, God "gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:15).

God does not always give us our request, for which we should be greatly thankful. Elijah prayed "that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, *take my life*, for I am no better than my fathers!'" (1 Kings 19:4). God said, "No!" Instead he has not died

to this day, and when he does it will be as a martyr instead of a religious suicide (Rev. 11:7). Paul prayed, “May this thorn in the flesh pass from me!” God said, “No,” and Paul gloried in the answer. Christ Prayed, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.” The Father said, “No,” and He (in His humanity) “learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:8, 9). We will be eternally thankful for that answer to His prayer! May we, too, pray “If it be possible” and “Not my will but Thine be done” – and *thank* Him for *unanswered* prayer if that is His response!

Their Itinerary in Retrospect (Numbers 33:1 - 49)

It is encouraging to realize that all the time Israel was wandering in the wilderness God knew where they were and cared enough to make a record of their travels. “Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD” (Num. 33:2). Even while they were in the wilderness as a chastening from the Lord He remained with them and supplied all their needs. “For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing” (Deut. 2:7). “In all their affliction He was afflicted” (Isa. 63:9) – or “In all their affliction He was *not their adversary*” (NASB margin).

The name “Kadesh” does not appear in this itinerary until verse thirty-six – far too late to be a reference to the time of their rebellion. It seems that the events of chapters thirteen and fourteen took place at “Rithmath” (Num. 33:18). Rithmath is thought to be either the original name of Kadesh-barnea or a location near it, to which the encampment had moved while the spies were away.¹⁰

It seems that between Numbers fourteen and this record of their travels they had made nineteen changes of location, and ended up right where they began – at Kadesh-barnea! After spending many days in Kadesh (Deut. 1:46) the Lord said, “You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn north” (Deut. 2:3 NASB). For nearly thirty-eight years they had been going around in circles and getting nowhere!

When they were back in Kadesh they were told to go north. However they did not continue northward for long. They were soon directed to turn eastward, to pass south of the Dead Sea, and then turn northward again to the banks of the Jordan, opposite Jericho.

Since they were at Kadesh when the time approached to enter the Promised Land, why didn't God direct them to invade it from the south, as they were told to do before, instead of from the east? Several possible reasons come to mind.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of this see The Pulpit Commentary, volume two, page 427 of the section on the book of Numbers.

If they had approached the land directly from Kadesh, as they had attempted to do years before, memories of the devastating defeat they had suffered there could have haunted them and destroyed their morale.

No doubt the people in the land north of Kadesh had been expecting another attempted attack for years and would have erected extensive defenses against it. God directed His people around their 'Maginot Line' of defense and came at them from a direction they didn't expect - and would have had little time to specifically prepare for.

The Canaanites may have assumed that Israel would not attempt to enter their land where it seemed least vulnerable. Jericho was their strong point. It was probably the best-fortified city in Palestine, and the Jordan constituted a 'moat' for further protection. This daring approach across the Jordan was sound battle strategy however. If the Israelites had begun by winning the easier battles north of Kadesh they would still be fearful of the more severe ones ahead of them. When they began by soundly defeating the most formidable of their foes the rest would seem like 'a piece of cake.' As a matter of fact this strategy backfired when, having conquered Jericho, they became overconfident. They *did* think the small city of Ai would be a 'piece of cake' - and suffered a humiliating defeat as a result.

When the Jordan was crossed miraculously, and the walls of Jericho fell at the mere sound of marching feet and the blast of ram's horns, the morale of the rest of the defenders of the land must surely have been shattered.

As we admire the strategy used by God in the campaign against the Canaanites, we need to be aware that Satan often steals the techniques God employed and turns them against us. When we expect him to attack from one direction he often mounts a flanking action against us and strikes us where we least expect it - where we and have not built up defenses against him. Our best option by far is to do as the Israelites did - let God be our commander, for He knows how to defeat our foe (Joshua 5:14).

Possibly the most important, and surely the most interesting and instructive, reason for the attack from the east had to do with the symbolism and typology involved in crossing the Jordan. The deep significance of that crossing will be discussed in some detail later (and see the Appendix).

This retrospect of their sojourn signals the end of their wanderings. They are knocking at the door of Canaan and all that remains before the crossing of the Jordan are the last minute instructions by Moses, and his farewell to his people. What jubilation must have been theirs!

The Division of the Land for the Twelve Tribes (Numbers 33:50 – 34:29)

There has been a progression of emphasis in regard to the Land of Promise leading up to their arrival at the Jordan River. The early theme addressed was "**What** is the land to be like?" Their future homeland was repeatedly described as a land flowing

with milk and honey. “**When** will we enter the land?” is a topic that surfaces early in the promise to Abraham, and is modified by several delays along the way. The most significant and heart rending delay was the thirty-eight years added at Kadesh. At Kadesh there was also a complete revision of **who** would enter that land. A second census replaced the first one. When they arrived at the Jordan, at last, the problems incident to possessing the land held their attention. **How** is the land to be divided?

They must have given attention to this matter with all the enthusiasm and anticipation of children getting ready to open their presents on Christmas morning.

Before detailing the distribution of the land a solemn warning was issued. The land is theirs, but they must totally dispossess all of its occupants. Failure to do so will spell ruin for them in the future - they will find themselves, in turn, dispossessed. “The warning is here given for the first time, because the danger was now near at hand, and had indeed already shown itself in the matter of the Midianitish women.”¹¹ A discussion of the ruthless measures enjoined upon the Israelites to accomplish their take-over of the land will be reserved for the Conclusion of this book.

Two basic principles for the distribution of the land were given at the outset. The location of their inheritances in the land is to be decided by lot and, secondly, the size of the area allotted to them will depend on the size of the tribe (Num. 33:54).

“The LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt [the Nile] to the great river, the River Euphrates’” (Gen. 15:18). The nation has never yet possessed this entire region, and it will not all be theirs until Christ is their King. The borders of the Promised Land, as set before Joshua, do not encompass as large an area as was promised to Abraham, and they are carefully laid out in Numbers 34:1 – 15. It was to be bounded by the Great Sea (the Mediterranean Sea) on the west, and the Jordan River (rather than the Euphrates River) on the east. It extended from somewhat north of the Sea of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee), to a bit south of the Salt Sea (the Dead Sea), evidently at some point touching on the Brook of Egypt (the Nile River).

Cities for the Levites (Numbers 35:1 – 8)

The tribe of Levi has been considered as separate from the other tribes in several distinct ways.

Even though Levi was a son of Jacob (Israel) like the other eleven tribal leaders, when the tribes are listed the name of Levi is usually omitted. Giving Joseph two tribes brought the number of tribes listed up to twelve. Because of the way God had used Joseph to provide for his brothers, having forgiven them for their insidious rejection of him earlier, Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons prophetically. “Bless the lads; *let my name be named upon them-*” (Gen. 48:16). In fulfillment of this prophecy Manasseh and

¹¹ The Pulpit Commentary, volume two, page 474 of the section on Numbers.

Ephraim were looked upon as the sons of Jacob rather than as his grandsons. Each of them became a patriarch of one of the tribes of Israel.¹²

The basis for the special place given to Levi was the Passover. Since the blood of the Passover lambs had saved the lives of the firstborn sons of Israel God considered them His purchased possession. However, instead of claiming the firstborn of each family He took the whole tribe of Levi as their substitutes, and they became His.

The Levites were given a special ministry for God and enjoyed a special relationship to Him. Only a Levite, who was also a descendent of Aaron, could be a priest – and the rest of the tribe were set aside to serve the Lord by being the assistants of the priests.

Because the priests and Levites were to be scattered among the other tribes, so they could minister to them, no special section of the Holy Land was given to them. How then were they to live if they had no tribal home? This problem was solved by assigning them cities among the tribes. “Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities” (Num. 35:2). This provision is described in verses three to five.

If they were not to inherit any land, were the Levites to have no inheritance?

The Lord gave instructions as to the sons of Aaron, the priests. “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; [but] *I am your portion and your inheritance* among the children of Israel” (Num. 18:20). What a glorious inheritance that was! They could be content with such things as they had, for they had *Him*! Compare: “Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13:5).

The rest of the Levites had an inheritance too, but it was not a portion of the land. “*The tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance*; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no [other] inheritance’” (Num. 18:24). “The LORD said to Aaron: ‘Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting’” (Num. 18:21).

But where will they live? As noted above, they were given cities – forty-eight of them (Num. 35:7). “The cities which you will give [to the Levites] shall be from the

¹² There is at least one instance where the list of tribes includes Levi. Levi will be one of the tribes making up the 144,000 witnesses during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:4 – 8. See v. 7). In this case the number of tribes is kept to twelve by omitting the tribe of Dan. While the Levites have no inheritance among the tribes, they will be associated with them as witnesses on this occasion. Dan lost that privilege – probably due to the fact that idolatry had been reintroduced into the tribes by them (Judges 18:30, 31).

possession of the children of Israel; from the larger tribe you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives" (Num. 35:8).

Refuge for the Manslayer (Numbers 35:9 – 34)

Of the forty-eight cities given to the Levites for their homes six of them were designated as "cities of refuge." These cities were scattered throughout the land so that one of them would be nearby, wherever a man might be located, when he had need of it. Three were to be on the western and three on the eastern side of the Jordan (Num. 35:14).

These cities were for the protection of those who had, unintentionally, taken the life of someone. They would be described today as those guilty of manslaughter. "These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there" (Num. 35:15). They were not available to murderers however. "But if [anyone] strikes [another] with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death" (Num. 35:16). What constitutes one a murderer is more fully defined in the following verses.

The cities of refuge may be considered a type of Christ only in a limited sense. Christ is indeed our refuge. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us" (Psa. 62:8). God is referred to as a refuge about fifteen times in the KJV of the Psalms. However there are many contrasts between the cities of refuge and Christ as our Refuge.

If the manslayer left the city of refuge before the death of the High Priest he was no longer protected. When we are in Christ we cannot flee from that refuge – it is forever. The city of refuge was protection from the hasty and unjustified judgment of men, only for certain deeds, and involved only protection for physical life. Our refuge is from righteous Judgment before the Judge of the Universe for all of our deeds – a Refuge He Himself has lovingly and graciously provided – and eternal life is at stake. The protection provided by the city of refuge was only until the death of the High Priest. Our High Priest will never die! "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). How our hearts should ring out with the words of the song "At Calvary" - written by William R. Newell!

Oh the love that drew salvation's plan!
 Oh the grace that brought it down to man!
 Oh the mighty gulf that God did span
 -- At Calvary!

Retention of the Tribal Distinctions (Numbers chapter thirty-six)

A short observation should suffice concerning this chapter. There must be no confusion concerning the inheritances of the tribes. The tribal boundaries could easily be obscured through intermarriages between them. This chapter recognizes that, and sets forth some ground rules to minimize it. It is an important consideration, for the tribal groupings are kept all through the history of Israel. They find a very prominent place to the very last. Their names are stipulated in the list of 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7:4 – 8) and in the description of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12). It is instructive to notice the number of times the number twelve, (the number characteristic of Israel) and multiples of it, occur in Rev. 21:12 – 21.

Surely God is not any less careful to maintain the *spiritual* distinctions set forth in Scripture. Paul admonishes us to “rightly divide” the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). How can we “approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10) if we cannot distinguish things that are different? Much of the muddled theology, past and present, stems from failure to distinguish between things that are different. Among other such things we need to distinguish between the kingdom program for Israel and the Age of Grace; between Israel and the Body of Christ; between law and grace; between standing and state; and between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God. May God grant us the will and ability to be diligent workers who do not need to be ashamed – rightly dividing the word of truth. Then may He also, by His Spirit, enable us to speak the truth in love! (Eph. 4:15). As we continue to search the Scriptures may we faithfully ***preach Jesus Christ*** – “according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25).