

## Introduction to this Booklet

In this booklet we are going to learn about God. The most important thing that we as human beings can do is to find out who God is. In this we are greatly blessed because God has revealed Himself to us; He has told us about Himself in the Bible. In this course, instead of looking at the whole of the Bible, we are going to be looking at one book only, the book of Exodus. Exodus was written primarily to tell the people of Israel who their God was and just about everything that we need to know about God we can find here. In this study, we will read through chapters 1-20 of Exodus and see what each passage teaches us about God. This booklet, therefore, is like a Bible study in chapters 1-20 of Exodus. Make sure that you use the booklet for that purpose. Before you work your way through a lesson, read the passage in Exodus on which that lesson is based. Even if you are studying this booklet as a group make sure that you as a group read the passage in Exodus first.

The study of God is, as we have seen, the most important study we can do and we therefore need to approach this study in the right way. There are many people who study the Bible to learn about God but they do not benefit at all from their studies because they do not do their studies in the right way. We would suggest that before each lesson you spend some time in prayer preparing your heart for what you are about to study. Ask God to give you a humble, teachable and responsive heart. Most people in the world have an idea of what God is like. Usually, their idea is based on their own thoughts rather than on God's word. Perhaps this is true of you. Perhaps you think that you know who God is and what He is like but you have never actually studied the Bible to find out what God says about Himself in it. Perhaps your ideas about who God is have come from your own thoughts and from teaching you have received rather than from the Bible.

Remember that the teaching you have received about God may not be correct at all, and it is possible that you really know very little about what He is actually like. The great danger for you is that when you come to some things which are very clearly taught in the Bible you are tempted to reject them because they do not agree with your ideas of who God is. When you come across something that does not agree with your ideas about who God is, you may be tempted to say, "I cannot believe that. It cannot be true." But this is arrogance and it is rejecting the word of God. Therefore, before you begin each lesson, pray to God that He would give you a heart that is humble and willing to be taught. Ask Him to give you a heart that is willing to discard anything that does not agree with His word, and to receive humbly and joyfully what the Bible teaches.

### Lesson One, Please read Exodus 1:1-2:22

This passage forms the introduction to the book of Exodus. It reminds us that Exodus continues the story from the book of Genesis, although the events in the book of Exodus are about 400 years after the end of Genesis. You may like to read the closing chapters of Genesis so that you have a good idea of the background. During the time of Joseph, the

people of Israel settled in the land of Egypt because there was a severe famine in their own land. In Egypt they had a good and comfortable life because Joseph held high office in government and was highly respected by the people of Egypt. In this passage we are told about how the Israelites settled in Egypt (1:1-5). Then we are told that over time, Joseph and his whole generation died, but the blessing of God remained upon the people of Israel and so they grew in number.

After about 400 years, a new king came on the throne of Egypt who did not know about Joseph. By this time the people of Israel had increased to such a large number that the king was worried that in the event of a war they would side with Egypt's enemies. So the king decided on a plan to get rid of the Israelites. He made them slaves and worked them very hard in the hope that the people of Israel would die out over time. However, "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (1:13). So the king embarked on a second plan. He instructed the Hebrew midwives to throw every new born Hebrew boy into the Nile.

The passage goes on to tell us about how Moses was born and how, in the providences of God, he became the son of Pharaoh's daughter and grew up in the palace. At the age of 40 Moses committed murder and so had to flee from Egypt. He settled in the land of Midian and there married Zipporah, one of the daughters of the priest of Midian. It would seem that Moses at this stage had no plans of returning to Egypt but was happy to live out his life in Midian.

In this passage there is one very important lesson to be learnt about God and it is this: **God orders the lives of His people in every detail.** We know this because more than 400 years earlier God had spoken to Abraham and had said to him,

*"Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions" (Gen. 15:13-14).*

God told Abraham all the details of how the people of Israel would be in Egypt, how they would be enslaved and how the Lord would deliver them miraculously. How did God know all this? It is not simply because God knows all things, it is because God arranges all things. The stay in Egypt and the slavery of the Israelites was not something that just happened, it was divinely arranged by God Himself; He arranged that things would turn out in this manner. **God orders the lives of His people in every detail.** Remember, however, that this does not mean the Egyptians were without guilt when they mistreated the people of Israel. They were cruel and selfish and were therefore responsible for their sins before God.

## Lesson Two, Please read Exodus 2:23-25

In this passage we come across the name of God for the first time in this book. In these three very important verses we learn some very precious things about God.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God hears the prayers of His people.** We are told in v. 23 that over a long period the people were in slavery and cried out to God. It may have seemed to them that God was not listening to them because it seems that for quite a long time there was no answer to their prayer. However, we are told that “their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning” (Ex. 2:24). God heard their prayer, even though it must have seemed to them that He was deaf to their cries. We must always remember that God will answer our prayers when it is best for Him to do so; He does not work according to our schedules, He has His own plans and purposes and He works according to them. We can pray to God, and indeed we must, but we cannot force God to answer our prayer at a certain time and in a certain way. We have been told to pray and we have been instructed to persist in prayer (Lk. 18:1-8), but nowhere does the Bible say that we can make God do things according to how we want them done.

2. We learn in the second place, that **God is faithful to His promises.** We are told, “He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” Many centuries earlier, God had made a covenant with Abraham and said to him, “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7). Here, God entered into a relationship with Abraham. He promised that He would be Abraham's God and the God of Abraham's descendants. He had promised Abraham that He would curse whoever cursed the people of Abraham (Gen. 12:3). These are promises He had made to Abraham. And so many centuries later when the children of Israel cried out to Him, He remembered this covenant and it is because of this that He came to their rescue. He dealt with the Egyptians the way He did because they ill-treated His people.

3. We learn in the third place, that **God is concerned about the plight of His people.** We read in this passage that “God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Ex. 2:25). He saw that His people were slaves of the Egyptians and He cared for them. He did not ignore them, He took note of what was happening to them. This, of course, is of great comfort to all God's people in all generations. Our troubles may be as nothing compared to what the Israelites faced, but the fact is that here on earth we do face many trials. Many times, like the Israelites, we cry out to God and it seems that God has not heard us. Many times we are tempted to think that God is distant and remote from us and does not care about us. Let us draw encouragement from this passage. Even though we may not see an answer to our prayers straightaway, we can be sure that God has heard us and that He is faithful to the promises He has made that He cares for us. The Bible says, “Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

## Lesson Three, Please read Exodus 3:1-12

In this passage we read that Moses, who was now 80 years old, was one day looking after sheep in the wilderness when God appeared to him and spoke to him. Again, this is a passage that is very rich in teaching us about the Person and Character of God.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God reveals Himself to His people.** We see in this passage that God spoke to Moses. This, in fact, is a feature of this book. Phrases like, “The Lord said” and “The Lord spoke” are found about 80 times in the book. Time and again God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself to Moses, then to the elders of Israel, then to Pharaoh and then to the whole nation of Israel. Our God is the God who makes Himself known. This is a very important thing for the very simple reason that if God did not reveal Himself, we would never know what He is like. If God had not told us what He is like, we would never know anything about Him. We are mere human beings with very limited knowledge and ability. Moreover, we are human beings who have fallen into sin. This means that if we are to know who God is then He must reveal Himself to us. If He does not speak, we will never know Him.

This is why the Bible is such an important book: it is God revealing Himself to us. We cannot guess the ways of God and character of God, we can only find it in the Bible. There are people today who claim to know the will of God and the ways of God without consulting the Scriptures. They claim that they know what God is like and what God will do in their lives and so on. Such people are totally wrong and badly mistaken. They are ignoring the Bible where God has revealed Himself and are trusting in their own thoughts about Him. This is a great mistake. God has revealed Himself in His word, let us not speculate about who He is and what He does. Instead let us give ourselves to the reading and studying of His word.

2. We learn in the second place that **God is holy.** God says to Moses, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” The word “holy” is one of the most important words in the Bible. In this passage it means, of course, that God is totally pure and sinless. This is why Moses had to be careful when coming into the presence of God. Like all human beings, Moses was a sinner and could not therefore rush into the presence of God without being aware of what he was doing. The Bible reminds us again and again that God is pure and sinless and perfect. Moreover, God says to His people, “Be holy for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44). We, the people of God, are to pursue purity in our lives because our Father in heaven is pure.

3. We learn in the third place, that **God is a God of salvation.** In v. 7 God says to Moses, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” The rescue of the people of Israel from Egypt is a picture of

our own salvation, which means that when we look at this rescue, we understand something about our own salvation from sin. There are five very important things to notice about this salvation.

(i) It is God Himself who saved the people of Israel from Egypt. Although He called Moses and sent him to Pharaoh, the actual work of saving the people of Israel was the work of God. He says, "I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians." In the same way our salvation from sin is exclusively the work of God; it is God who planned our salvation and it is God who carried out that plan by sending His Son into the world to be our Saviour. We are not saved by our own efforts or works, we are saved by God: "Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

(ii) God rescued the people of Israel from misery and slavery. This is a picture of sin. People often think that life in the world is a life of fun and enjoyment and that when a person gets saved he no longer has a life of fun. But the reason they think like this is because sin has deceived them. This is why Paul says, "Sin deceived me" (Rom. 7:11). Sin is a deceptive thing. It deceives us into thinking that life in the world is good when in fact it is a life of misery and slavery. When we get saved, we are rescued from this kind of life.

(iii) God promised to take them from a land of slavery to "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." This is the way God planned their salvation. He did not release them from slavery and then set them free in the wilderness to take care of themselves. He did not say to them, "You asked me to remove you from slavery, so I have done it, now go and make your own way in the world." He takes them out of Egypt and takes them into a good land. This is how our salvation is. God does not remove us from slavery to sin and then leave us to get on with life the best we can. He saves us from sin and adopts us into His own family as His beloved children. He sends the Holy Spirit to come and live in us so that we are perfected into the image of the Lord Jesus, and then He takes us to heaven to be with Him for eternity.

(iv) When God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt He used Moses. As we shall see later in this study, God is all powerful, He can do anything He likes. It is not the case, therefore, that He had to use Moses and that without Moses He was unable to do His work. However, this rescue of Israel was designed in such a way that we would learn much from it about our own salvation. And so God sent Moses to the people of Israel and brought them out of slavery through Moses. It was Moses who led them out. All Israelites who wanted to be free from slavery had to follow Moses. If they did not follow Moses they would not be rescued from slavery. Now when we look at this carefully, we can see that Moses is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as God sent Moses to the people of Israel who were His chosen people, so He sent the Lord Jesus to His chosen people in the world today. Just as Moses confronted Pharaoh and victoriously led the people of Israel out of Egypt, so the Lord Jesus confronted the devil who held the people of God in slavery to sin and victoriously secured their salvation. And just as Moses led the people of Israel through

the wilderness and to the Promised Land, so the Lord Jesus leads us throughout our lives here on earth and will one day lead us into heaven itself.

(v) God rescued only those who were His people. He brought out of Egypt the people of Abraham. We do not read anywhere in this book that He also rescued other people. It may well have been that there were other people in Egypt who were also enslaved by the Egyptians. But they were not the covenant people of God, He had no covenant with their forefathers so He did not save them. This is an important matter that we need to understand carefully. Why is it that today there are some people who are saved and some are not? Why is it that in a house you will find perhaps the mother and one child saved but the father and the other child not saved? The Bible's answer is that the ones who are saved are the chosen people of God. They are saved because they were chosen from before the foundation of the world to be saved (see Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13). When Jesus was here on earth, there were many people who did not believe in Him. Jesus said to them, "You do not believe because you are not my sheep" (John 10:26). Just as there was a group of people in Egypt who were God's people, so there are people in the world today who are Christ's sheep. They and they only are the ones who will listen to His voice and come to follow Him.

## Lesson Four, Please read Exodus 3:11-22

In this passage, we read of God's conversation with Moses. Once again the passage is full of teaching about who God is.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God understands human weaknesses**. When God commands Moses to go back to Egypt to deliver His people, Moses says, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" This, of course, was a perfectly natural question. Moses was no longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He had been in the wilderness of Midian for 40 years. It is highly unlikely that people in Egypt remembered him anymore. As far as Pharaoh was concerned Moses was only some insignificant shepherd from the desert. He probably would not get a chance to go anywhere near Pharaoh to speak to him. God understood Moses' problem and promised to intervene for him. We, the people of God, frequently find ourselves in a situation like this where we are unable to do what we need to do. We must remember that God understands our weaknesses and will come to our aid.

2. We learn in the second place that **God is the eternal God who has always existed and always will exist**. In this conversation, Moses asks God His name. In answer, "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.'" The phrase "I am" is a translation of the Hebrew name Yahweh, today we say Jehovah. This name means that God has existed eternally, even before there was anything or anyone, He has always existed. It means that He will always exist, even if there were no one else in the future, God will always be there. The name also means that God does not depend on anyone for His existence. We as human beings depend totally on God for our existence. If God did not exist we would not exist either. This is why Paul says, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

3. We learn in the third place, that **God controls the future**. In vs. 18-22 God describes to Moses five things that would happen in the future.

- (i) He tells Moses that the elders of the Israelites will listen to him (v.18).
- (ii) He tells Moses that he and the elders of Israel will be granted an opportunity to speak to the king of Egypt (v.18).
- (iii) He tells Moses that the king of Egypt will not let them go until he has seen the mighty power of God (v.19).
- (iv) He tells Moses that a number of plagues will take place before the king agrees to let Israel go (v.20).
- (v) He tells Moses that the Egyptians will be kind to the Israelites when they leave Egypt (vs.21-22).

The reason why God could say all this is quite simple; it is He who arranged all these things. The reason God knows the future is because He has arranged the future. It was He who arranged that the elders of Israel would listen to Moses. It was He who arranged that

Pharaoh would allow Moses and the elders into his presence and would allow them to talk to him even though Pharaoh was a great king and the people of Israel were mere slaves. It was God who planned that Pharaoh should say no when he was asked to let the people of Israel go. All these events show clearly that God plans and controls the future of every single human being here on earth.

4. We learn in the fourth place, that **God is all wise in all His plans**. As we have seen, God is all powerful and He controls the future. Whatever He wants to happen will happen. And so God could have released the Israelites from slavery in Egypt within a few hours. He could have moved within Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would have let the Israelites go straightaway. Or alternatively, God could have destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians and released His people. Indeed, God says to Pharaoh: "By now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the face of the earth" (Ex. 9:15). We know that much later in the history of Israel, God moved in the heart of a king so that the king let the people of Israel go. This happened when the people of Israel were carried off to Babylon in exile because of their sins. After they had been in exile for 70 years, we are told that the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm to release the people of Israel (see Ezra 1:1). Immediately Cyrus issued this decree and the people were released straightaway and began to return to their homes in Jerusalem.

So, God could have moved in the heart of Pharaoh to issue just such a decree to release the people of Israel and they would have been released without any intervention from Moses, or God could have destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians in an instant. But we find that in Egypt God did not do either of these things. In fact, rather surprisingly, He hardened Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh did not listen to Moses and did not obey the word of the Lord. Moses was told, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go" (Ex. 4:21). And this is exactly what God did, because later we are told, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron; the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go" (Ex. 9:12; 10:20).

Now the question, of course, is why? Why should God deliberately harden a man's heart so that he does not obey the word of the Lord? There are two passages in this book of Exodus where we are given the answers to this question.

- (i) In Exodus 9:16 God says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." In this verse we find two reasons why God deliberately hardened Pharaoh's heart when Moses spoke to him the word of the Lord.

In the first place, God wanted to show Pharaoh His power: "I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power." Pharaoh was the king of Egypt which in those days was one of the most powerful countries in the world. It was a country with

great wealth and a very sophisticated civilisation. Before long, the king of such a country begins to think that he is more powerful than anyone else in the universe and that no one can stop him, he can do anything he likes. Quite clearly Pharaoh was just such a person because he enslaved the people of Israel and tried to destroy them. The deliverance of the people of Israel therefore was arranged in such a way that Pharaoh was left in no doubt at all that he was but a tiny instrument in the hands of the almighty and all-powerful God. Many centuries later, the same thing happened to the king of Babylon who also became proud and arrogant because of the power he had. He was driven out to eat grass with the animals (see Dan. ch. 4).

The second reason given in this verse (Exodus 9:16) why God hardened Pharaoh's heart is so that His name "might be proclaimed in all the earth." God wanted Pharaoh to know that He is almighty and all-powerful, and He wanted the nations of the earth to know that He is almighty and all-powerful. If God had moved in the heart of Pharaoh to release Israel without any fuss then it would not have been a major event. But God deliberately made the deliverance of Israel into a very major incident so that all the nations would hear about it. This, of course, happened. Some forty years later when Joshua led the people of Israel into the promised land, they met a woman called Rahab in the city of Jericho who said to them, "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt" (Josh. 2:10).

So we learn from Exodus 9:16 two reasons why God hardened Pharaoh's heart: He wanted Pharaoh and the nations of the earth to know that He is almighty and all-powerful.

(ii) In Exodus 10:1-2 God says to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the Lord." In this passage we again find two reasons why God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This time the reasons apply to the Israelites not the Egyptians.

In the first place, it was so that the Israelites may tell their children and grandchildren how harshly the Lord dealt with the Egyptians. The Egyptians were great sinners in the sight of God, this is why God dealt with them so harshly. On the night of the passover, the Lord passed through Egypt and destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians. The reason He did this is given in the Bible: "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every first-born – both men and animals – and I will bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord" (Exodus 12:12). God wanted Israel to learn this lesson so that they too do not fall into sin. If the Israelites saw a great display of the judgement of God then they would remember it forever and not fall into sin themselves. This is why God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that eventually the plague of the first-born would happen.

Secondly, He hardened Pharaoh's heart so that Israel may know that He is the Lord. As we shall see later in this course, the people of Israel had fallen into idolatry in Egypt. They

had forgotten the greatness of their God and had begun to bow down to worthless idols. Now God was planning to release them from slavery and make them His own people. It was of the greatest importance, therefore, that they learn that He is not some powerless idol but the almighty God of heaven who controls all things. If they were to live as the people of God then they needed to have a correct view of who their God is. And so God used these mighty acts in Egypt to reveal His character to them.

The lesson for us today is that we, like the Israelites, can forget the greatness of the God we worship. We need to remind ourselves of His great works in history and of His great work in saving us. Only when we have a correct view of God can we love Him and serve Him aright.

## Lesson Five, Please read Exodus chapter 4.

Once again in this chapter we learn some very important lessons about God.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God is in complete control of the natural world.** In vs. 1-9 we read of three miracles. In the first one, Moses throws his stick to the ground and it turns into a snake. When he picked it up it became a stick again. In the second one, Moses' hand became leprous and was then restored again. And then finally God said to him that if the people of Israel still did not believe in him then he was to take some water from the river Nile and pour it out and it would turn into blood. These three miracles were designed to show a very important lesson to the Israelites, that God has complete control over the natural world and that He controls it for His own purpose and glory. There are two main reasons why the Israelites needed to be taught this important lesson.

(i) For some 400 years the Israelites had lived in the land of Egypt where the people worshipped idols. It is a common thing in life that if we live among people who worship false gods, we begin to take in some of their beliefs, perhaps without even thinking about it. The Egyptians, like all idolaters, believed that there were many gods and that each god was in control of a certain aspect of the natural world. They would probably believe that there was one god in charge of the harvest, another in charge of fishing, and so on. This, of course, is false thinking. There is only one God and He is in control of all things. The people of Israel needed to know and remember this if they were to walk faithfully with their God, who is the only true God.

(ii) The Israelites were to leave Egypt and spend some 40 years in the wilderness during which time they had to depend totally upon God for all their needs. If they were to walk faithfully with God and not desert Him then they needed to know that He was in control of all things and so was able to provide for all their needs.

2. We learn in the second place that **God is in control of all of man's abilities and all of man's difficulties or infirmities.** We read in this passage that when Moses argued with God and said that he was slow of speech, God answered him, "Who gave man his mouth? And who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I the Lord?" (v. 11). There are two important things we are taught here:

(i) God is in control of all of man's abilities. He said to Moses, "Who gave man his mouth?" The Bible speaks much about the gifts that God gives to His people. This is seen particularly in the New Testament when the Lord Jesus gave gifts to His people through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:7-16). The Bible makes it quite clear that these gifts are given by God Himself and that He gives these gifts graciously. We do not earn gifts by our holy lives or anything like that, the gifts are given freely.

(ii) God is in control of all of man's difficulties and infirmities. This is teaching that many

people find difficult to accept. Many people believe that if a person has good health and is able to see and hear then it is because God has blessed him, but if he has bad health or if he cannot see or hear then it is because the devil has brought these difficulties upon him. They believe that God desires that everyone should have the best of health and should have the ability to see and hear but sometimes these wishes of God are frustrated, what He wants to happen does not happen because man does not have faith or because the devil got in the way. But this verse makes it very clear that God is in complete control over all these circumstances. God says to Moses, "Who gave man his mouth? And who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I the Lord?"

Why should God make a man deaf or mute or blind? The only answer we have is that God does everything for His own glory, and somehow the person who is deaf or mute or blind brings glory to God through his infirmities. When Jesus was here on earth there was a belief that if a person had physical infirmities then it must be because either he or his parents had sinned. This is why we read in Jn. 9:1-2, "As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" This is the belief of many today. If a man is blind or deaf or mute it must be because of some bad thing that either he or his ancestors did. They believe that God does not want the man to be in this condition and that if the man has strong faith in God then he will be healed. But notice that this is not a teaching that is found in the Bible. When the disciples asked him this question, Jesus' reply was, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God may be displayed in his life" (Jn. 9:3).

This is the clear teaching of Scripture. It is God who makes a person deaf or mute or blind and He does this so that His work in that person's life may be displayed. It may be that a deaf person is able to bear his trials with great patience and cheerfulness and so shows how gracious God is to him. We do not have all wisdom and we cannot tell how the work of God will be seen in a person's life. But this is what the Bible teaches and this we have to accept in submission to God's word.

3. We learn in the third place, that when **God commissions His servant to do a certain task, then He expects that servant to do the work and not make excuses.** We find in this passage that Moses is unwilling to do the work that God wants him to do. He first says that he is not very good in speaking. In answer to this, God reminds him that all man's speaking abilities come from Him (vs. 10-11). Moses then asks God to send someone else (v.13). However, God has decided that Moses is the man to do this work and he must therefore do it. He does not decide that since Moses is unwilling He will find someone else. His anger burns against Moses although in grace and kindness He says to Moses that he can take Aaron with him. As we read the book of Exodus we see that it was Moses who in the end did the talking with Pharaoh and it was he who led the people of Israel out of Egypt. This is how God has always worked; He gives a person certain gifts and requires that person to do a certain job for Him. He will not then allow that person to evade his responsibility. Perhaps the greatest example of this is Jonah who was told to go to Ninevah

and preach to the people there (Jonah 1:1). Jonah does not want to do this so he tries to escape by running in the opposite direction. God sends a large fish to bring him back to shore and then commissions him again with the same work (Jonah 3:1).

Just like Moses and Jonah, God has given gifts to all His children and He expects us to do our work. If a person has the gift of teaching children in the local church then it is his duty to make sure that he commits himself to that work and do it well. He cannot say, "I know it is my duty to teach the children in the church but I am too busy at work, let someone else do it." God is not pleased with such behaviour.

4. We learn in the fourth place, that **God alone owns His people**. Pharaoh enslaved the people of Egypt and he thought that they were his property. However, Moses was told to take this message to Pharaoh: "Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, 'Let my son go that he may worship me'" (v. 22). Those whom God has called into His kingdom now belong to Him; they are His people and His property. This is why Paul says to Christians, "You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Because we are the property of God, we do not have the right or the freedom to follow our desires. Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour of His people. As their Saviour He brings to them the forgiveness of their sins and cleansing in His blood. As their Lord, He demands of them complete obedience to His will. The children of God do not have the choice of whether they are going to obey the Bible or not. A person cannot say, "I know the Bible commands me to do this but my employer or my husband or my pastor has asked me to do the opposite and I cannot disobey them." The employer or the husband or the pastor does not own that person, God owns them and God's word must be obeyed.

5. We learn in the fifth place that **God sends severe judgement on those who disobey His word when it is clearly revealed**. The words that Moses was to take to Pharaoh were these: "I told you, 'Let my son go so that he may worship me.' But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your first born son" (v.23). In Ex. 12:29 we read these words, "At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well." The reason why Pharaoh's firstborn son was killed was because he refused to let the people of Israel go despite receiving very clear directions about it. To hear the word of God is a great privilege, but we must remember that this privilege comes with the responsibility to obey what we have heard. There are many in our country today who are able to read and have their own Bible. This is a great blessing from God. But we need to remember that there is a greater duty laid upon us because we have been given much. It is Jesus Himself who said, "The servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows...From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (Lk. 12:47-48). There are many people in the world who do not know the will of God for they do not have access to the Bible and have never read the Bible. That is not true of us, we know the will of God, let us not ignore it and so face the severe judgement of God.

## Lesson Six, Please read Exodus 5:1-6:8

In this passage we learn three important truths about God.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God is kind and gracious even to those who do not know Him**. When Moses and Aaron went to speak to Pharaoh, Pharaoh said to them, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and will not let Israel go" (v. 2). In all probability, this statement was a correct one. The revelation of God in the Old Testament was given only to the people of Israel. At the time that these events in the book of Exodus happened none of the books of the Bible had yet been written. So it is very likely that Pharaoh was speaking the truth when he said that he did not know the Lord. And yet Pharaoh was the king of one of the most powerful countries in the world at the time, a country that had abundant wealth. There are two important lessons to be learned from this:

(i) It teaches us in the first place that just because a person or a nation has material wealth it does not mean they have the approval of God. It is very common in our country for people to say, "That person is blessed, he has a nice job, a nice house and a big car. God has really blessed him and God is pleased with him." But the Bible teaches quite clearly that a person who is completely ungodly like Pharaoh can be healthy and wealthy. It is not because God is pleased with him, it is because God is gracious. Jesus said, "God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45). In Psalm 73 we read these words:

*"I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

*They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.*

*They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.*

*This is what the wicked are like – always carefree, they increase in wealth"*

*(Ps. 73:3-5;12).*

Let us not, therefore, think that those who are wealthy and healthy have the blessing and approval of God. This may not be the case at all.

(ii) It teaches us in the second place that God is gracious. Although Pharaoh did not know Him and did not acknowledge Him yet God provided for Pharaoh and for the whole country of Egypt and made it a wealthy country. The Bible tells us that God is good to His enemies and that Christ died for us while we still His enemies (Rom. 5:8).

2. We learn in the second place, that **God will sometimes bring difficulties upon His people in order to test and strengthen their faith in Him**. We read in this passage that when Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, Pharaoh did not release the people but on the contrary made things even more difficult for them. He gave orders that the people were no longer to be supplied with straw for brick-making but were to find their own straw. As we have seen in these studies, God is all powerful and in complete control of all things. Why,

then, did He not allow Pharaoh to release the people straightaway? One of the reasons, as we have seen, is that He wanted to display His glory both to Pharaoh and to His people Israel. But there is another reason for this: He wanted to test and strengthen the faith of His people Israel because there were many trials ahead of them both in the wilderness and also when they began the occupation of the promised land. They needed to have a strong faith in the Lord and these trials were designed just for that purpose. This is how God deals with His children in all ages. He knows that we need a strong faith in Him if we are to live Christian lives here on earth and not give up. And so sometimes He will bring difficulties upon us to strengthen our faith in Him (James 1:2-4).

3. We learn in the third place that **God is a God of covenant**. He says to Moses, “I also established my covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Ex. 6:4). This is, perhaps, one of the most important things we learn about God in the Bible, that He is a God who enters into covenant with His people. In fact God does not do anything outside of a covenant. What is a covenant? Very basically, a covenant is a relationship between two parties where each party commits themselves to the other. In the book of Hosea God speaks about His relationship with Israel in terms of a marriage, because a marriage is such a good illustration of a covenant. In a marriage both the man and the woman take vows to be loyal, faithful, loving and caring towards each other. This is how God deals with us as human beings. In this passage, He says to Moses that He entered into a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The clearest expression of this covenant is found in Gen. 17:1-9. In this passage, God says to Abraham, “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7). God here entered into a binding relationship with Abraham and promised to be Abraham's God, meaning He promised to provide for Abraham and his descendants and to protect them. In return, He says to Abraham, “Walk before me and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1). When God rescued the Israelites from Egypt, He did so in order that they would become His covenant people. This is why He says to them, “I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians” (6:6-7).

It is most important for us as Christians to understand that there is a covenant between us and God. When He saves us, we enter into a relationship with Him. Our salvation is not simply God rescuing us from sin and then having no further dealings with us. When God saves us, He rescues us from sin and all its powers and He brings us into His family and adopts us as His children. We then become His people, He has a claim on us and commands us on how to live our lives here on earth. There is no salvation without a covenant relationship with God. We cannot say that Christ has saved us from our sins and we can now live as we want without any reference to Him or to His word. He has saved us for His own glory that we might be like Him and be changed into His image.

## Lesson Seven, Please read Exodus chapters 7-10

In this four chapters we have the account of the confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh during which Moses appears before Pharaoh ten times. Also in these four chapters, we read the account of nine of the ten plagues that God sent upon Egypt. Before proceeding with this lesson, make a careful list of these nine plagues. This list will help you enormously as you study this lesson.

1. We learn in the first place that **when God saves His people He confronts and utterly defeats his enemies**. In the earlier chapters of the book of Exodus, we read of Pharaoh as a mighty king in Egypt, a man who thinks of himself as under no one's authority. But as the story progresses, Pharaoh is seen increasingly for what he is: a mere man who has no power at all in the sight of God. As we have seen in this booklet, the rescue of the Israelites from Egypt was designed in such a way as to teach us about our own salvation. Just as the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, so we were slaves of sin; just as God raised up a man and sent him to lead them out of slavery, so God sent the Lord Jesus to redeem us from slavery to sin; and just as Moses led the people through the wilderness and on to the promised land, so the Lord Jesus leads us through all the difficulties and trials of life here on earth and on to heaven. Now in these four chapters in Exodus we see very clearly that in order to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, Moses first had to confront Pharaoh and Pharaoh had to be completely defeated. The people of Israel did not sneak out of Egypt in the middle of the night when no one was watching, they left triumphantly after Pharaoh had been confronted and had been completely defeated so that he was powerless to stop them.

In these confrontations between Moses and Pharaoh we have a picture of how our Lord Jesus Christ confronted the devil and defeated him in order to release His people from slavery to sin. In fact, when we look at the life of Moses we see so much of the life of Christ.

(i) Notice in the first place, that Pharaoh tried to kill Moses when he was newly born. Pharaoh had issued an order that all Israelite male babies should be drowned. The decree was not aimed at Moses specifically but Moses was included and would have died but for the intervention of God. In the same way, Herod issued a decree that all boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity should be killed (Matt. 2:16-18). It was an attempt by the devil to stop the work of Jesus right at His birth.

(ii) Notice in the second place that on four occasions Pharaoh tried to bargain with Moses and negotiate some sort of deal with him. In Ex. 8:25 he said to Moses, “Go sacrifice to your God here in this land.” In other words, he was willing to let the Israelites sacrifice to God but he was not willing to release them. Then in 8:28 he says, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far.” Then in Ex. 10:11 he says, “Let only the men go; and worship the Lord.” Finally, in Ex. 10:24 he says, “Go worship the Lord. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave

your flocks and herds behind.” In other words, Pharaoh is saying to Moses, “I will allow you to do what your God commands, but I am not willing to release you from this land, you must remain my slaves.” In the same way, the devil tried to bargain with Jesus and to negotiate some sort of deal with Him, so that Jesus could do in part what God wanted and the devil could remain undefeated. The most clear example of this is when the Lord was being tempted in the wilderness. The devil knew that the Lord Jesus was to be given all authority over all nations and so he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour and said, “All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me” (Matt. 4:9).

(iii) Notice in the third place that just as Pharaoh was utterly defeated and rendered powerless, so the Lord Jesus by His death on the cross defeated Satan and bound him. The Bible says that Jesus became fully man, “so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb. 2:14-15). It tells us that by His work on the cross, the Lord Jesus seized Satan and bound him so that he may deceive the nations no longer (Rev. 20:2-3). That is why when the resurrected Lord appeared to His disciples He said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18-19). There was a time when the devil as a strong man held the nations of the world in darkness (Acts 14:16). But when the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, He fought with the devil, defeated him and tied him up (Matt 12:29). The nations of the world are now His inheritance (Ps. 2:8), and He will call out His chosen people from among them.

2. We learn in the second place, something of **how God hardened Pharaoh's heart**. We have been told several times in this book that the reason why Pharaoh did not let Israel go is because God hardened his heart. It was the purpose of God that Pharaoh should resist the will of God even when it was made clear to him through the plagues that God is all powerful and in control of all things. Pharaoh witnessed miracle after miracle during the plagues which told him clearly that the God of the Israelites is in control of all things, and yet despite seeing all this, he refused to let the Israelites go because God hardened his heart. Just how did God do this? When we read these chapters where the plagues are described, we get some idea of how God did this work.

(i) In the first place, God allowed the magicians of Egypt to imitate the miracles that He did through Moses. So when we read the text we find that the first three miracles are all imitated but then the miracles that follow after these first three the Egyptian magicians are unable to imitate. Perhaps Pharaoh might have been impressed with the power of Israel's God when Aaron's staff became a snake, when the Nile turned to blood and when frogs invaded the land. But when his own magicians did the same three things he came to the conclusion that the God of the Israelites was no more powerful than the idols of Egypt. And so he hardened his heart.

(ii) After these first three events, Pharaoh's heart had become so hard that even when his

own magicians told him after the next plague, “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19), he was not willing to listen; his heart was hard. There is a great and important warning for everyone here who listens to the word of God but does not respond to it. If we harden our hearts against the word of God, the time will come when our hearts have become so hard that we are unable to respond to the word of God even when we are told to do so clearly as Pharaoh was.

(iii) When the fourth plague came, Pharaoh began to realise that the God of the Israelites was indeed mighty and powerful. However, he was still reluctant to allow the Israelites to leave, and so offered to them a compromise: they could offer a sacrifice to their God but it must be in the land of Egypt itself (Ex. 8:25). It seems that he thought to himself that he could satisfy God with a token gesture. We see further attempts by Pharaoh to offer a compromise to God in these passages: Ex. 8:28, Ex. 10:8-11 and Ex. 10:24. These gestures all show that Pharaoh's heart was so hardened that he is simply unwilling to do the will of God. The gestures are designed to salve his conscience that he did agree to what God has commanded of him. This is a typical feature of a person who has hardened his heart against God; he will attend church and put money in the offering and will try to assure himself that he has done all he needs to obey God.

It is interesting to note that although God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it does not mean that Pharaoh is no longer responsible for his actions. He cannot say, “Its not my fault that my heart is hard, God hardened it.” After all, he did not know it was God who hardened his heart! Even though he is an instrument in the hands of God, he is still responsible before God for his sins. This is why several times in text the responsibility is put on Pharaoh: we are told it is Pharaoh who hardened his heart.

3. We learn in the third place that **God is able to protect His people in the midst of all the trials of life**. We are told that at least three of the plagues did not come upon the people of Israel. These were the plague on the cattle (Ex. 9:1-4), the plague of hail (Ex. 9:22-26), and the plague of the darkness (Ex. 10:21-23). These plagues were directed specifically upon the people of Egypt, the people of God were protected from them. God does not protect us from all the trials of life. It is not true to say that if we get saved we will have no problems at all; the people of Israel after they were released from Egypt faced many trials in the wilderness. However, this passage shows us that God is able to protect us and keep us in the midst of all the trials of life.

## Lesson Eight, Please read Exodus chapters 11-14

These chapters in the book of Exodus describe the judgement upon the Egyptians and the deliverance of the people of Israel. They teach us three very important lessons about God.

1. We learn in the first place, that **God is holy and just**. In these chapters we learn of how God personally visited the land of Egypt. He says, “About midnight I will go throughout Egypt” (Ex. 11:4). His purpose is to exercise judgement upon the people of Egypt for their idolatry: “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every first born – both men and animals and I will bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord” (Ex. 12:12). It is important for us to remember that the reason why the Lord visited Egypt on that night and struck down the first born of the Egyptians is not because He wanted to persuade Pharaoh to release the Israelites or because He merely wanted to show Pharaoh how powerful He is, it was because He is holy and just and punishes sin. The people of Egypt worshipped false gods and this in the sight of God is a grave sin. And so God visited the land of Egypt on that night to bring punishment upon the people of Egypt for their sin.

The holiness of God is a subject many of us do not like to think about. We know that we have sinned against God and are guilty before Him. The thought of God being holy and just therefore worries us. And yet it is not a subject we can avoid. We cannot just pretend that our sins do not matter or that God will overlook them. Until we accept that we are sinners and God is holy we will never be saved. Once we have accepted our desperate condition we will come to Christ seeking salvation.

2. We learn in the second place, that **God is full of mercy and grace**. We read that on the night that God passed through Egypt it was only the first born of the Egyptians that were killed. The first born of the Israelites were not touched. The reason for this is not that the Israelites were pure and sinless. In fact the Bible makes it quite clear that while the Israelites were in Egypt they too fell into the sin of idolatry and were as guilty of idolatry as the Egyptians were. Many centuries later, the prophet Ezekiel recounts what happened in Egypt when God revealed Himself to the Israelites:

*“On that day I swore to them to bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. And I said to them, ‘Each of you get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’ But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt” (Eze. 20:6-8).*

This is why after Israel had conquered much of the promised land, Joshua said to them, “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:14). So the reason why the first born of the Israelites were not killed on the night that God visited Egypt in judgement is not because the Israelites were guiltless, it is because God is

full of grace and mercy. This is why He gave very specific instructions to the Israelites:

*“Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the door-frame. Not one of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the door-frame and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down” (Exodus 12:21-23).*

In grace and mercy God provided a way out for the Israelites so that they would not be judged for their sins: they were to slaughter the Passover lamb and put its blood on the sides of the door-frame.

This, of course, was designed to prepare the people of God for the actual Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole exodus story is designed to teach us who God is and how He has saved us from our sins. We see here that we who are saved were no better than the people of the world when we were saved. The Israelites were as guilty of idolatry as the Egyptians. But they were God's chosen people, and so He provided a means by which they escaped the just penalty of God for their sins. In the same way, we who are saved are the chosen people of God. He chose us for salvation before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13), and provided a means for us to escape eternal judgement when He sent the Lord Jesus to be our Passover Lamb: “Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7).

3. We learn in the third place, that **God saves His people through miraculous means**. The book of Exodus has more miracles in it than most books of the Bible. In fact, probably only the Gospels have more miracles than Exodus. When we examine the miracles in Exodus, we find that they were all focused on the release of the Israelites from Egypt:

- First there were the miracles that Moses and Aaron did to persuade the leaders of Israel that God really had spoken to them (Exodus 4:1-7; 4:29-31).
- Then there were the miracles which Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh and his magicians (Exodus 7:8-13).
- Then there were the ten plagues (Exodus 8:14-11:10).
- Then there was the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22).
- And then the miraculous provision of water and food in the wilderness and the defeat of the Amalekites (Exodus chs. 16-17).

All these were specifically designed to show the people of Israel that their deliverance from out of slavery in Egypt was a mighty and miraculous work of God. These things teach us this very important lesson that our salvation from sin is a mighty and miraculous work of

God. It is matter of great sadness that people today simply do not understand what salvation is all about. A person thinks to himself, "I will get saved," by which he means, "I will stop some of my sinful ways and I will start living a better life and I will start attending church." But this is not salvation. This is simply a man making some few attempts to improve his life. He is not saved and is not going to enter heaven because of these few efforts he has made.

Salvation is not the work of man it is the work of God: "Salvation belongs to the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and it is a miraculous work of God. Before a person is saved he is dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1). So the first miraculous work of God is to make him spiritually alive. This God does by His Spirit (Jn. 3:8). The person who is unsaved is full of sin and an enemy of God. So God then does another miraculous work in him by drawing him to Christ in repentance and faith. The person is then saved and becomes a child of God. However, he still has sin dwelling in him and that sin needs to be rooted out. And so God continues His miraculous work in that person by changing him from within. He works in the person's heart so that the person wants to do what God desires (Phil. 2:13). Salvation, then, is a mighty and miraculous work of God rather than a feeble attempt by man to please God by his good works.

## Lesson Nine, Please read Exodus chapters 15-18

In these chapters we read firstly the song of Moses and Miriam after the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and then we read about how the children of Israel made their way to Mount Sinai. There are four important lessons from these chapters.

1. In the first place, we learn that **the reason why God does His works is so that the whole of creation may praise Him.** In chapter 15 we read that after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they sang a song to the Lord praising Him for saving them and destroying the Egyptians. This song is an important part of this book because it gives praise to God alone for the salvation of the Israelites. The focus of the whole song is God and His great works in saving the Israelites. The main purpose why God saves anyone is so that He might be glorified. This is something we need to understand very carefully. When a person gets saved he receives many blessings from God, and so he can begin to think that the chief purpose why God saved him was to bless him. But this is not true. Even though we receive countless blessings from God when we get saved, the chief purpose of God in saving us is not that we might be blessed but that God might be glorified. In Ephesians 1:3-14 we read of God's great work of salvation. Paul in that passage tells us how God elected us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), how Christ redeemed us through His blood (Eph. 1:7) and how the Holy Spirit seals us until we are fully redeemed (Eph. 1:14). Now when we examine this passage carefully, we find that there is one phrase that occurs three times: "To the praise of His glorious grace; for the praise of His glory; to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:5;12;14). In other words Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter one that God the Father elected us so that He might get all the praise, the Lord Jesus redeemed us so that God might get all the praise, and the Holy Spirit came to live in us so that God might get all the praise. The chief purpose of our salvation is so that God may be glorified. God planned our salvation carefully so that no saved person should boast (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9). The person who boasts about how he himself got saved has not understood his salvation at all. The reason why God saves us is so that we may give Him all the glory for our salvation and not boast of what we have done.

2. In the second place, we learn that **God watches over His people and provides for them throughout their lives on earth.** We read in this passage that after the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they went into the desert of Shur (Ex. 15:22). During this time the Lord provided food and water for them. Also during this time, they came under attack from the Amalekites, and the Lord delivered them in answer to Moses' prayer (Exodus 17:8-15). The time that the Israelites spent in the wilderness is like our Christian lives here on earth. Like the Israelites, we have been delivered from slavery, like them we are on our way to the Promised Land and like them we have a long and demanding journey before we get there. And so the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness are of great comfort to us. There are three things about their experience that we need to take note of.

(i) The Lord provided for all their needs. As we have seen, He provided for their daily needs and He protected them from their enemies. In the same way the Lord has promised

to provide for those who are saved and to protect them as they live Christian lives here on earth.

(ii) The Lord expected them to exert effort. For instance, we read that when the Amalekites attacked them, they were expected to fight. They could not just sit and watch God destroy their enemies. They were expected to enter into a fight. In the same way, God expects us to exert energy in our day to day lives. We are to labour for our food and not depend upon others, we are to use our gifts in the local church and not just expect the pastors to do everything and we are put to death the deeds of the flesh and pursue holiness. These are duties that are laid upon us and we cannot evade them.

(iii) The Lord expected them to have faith in Him in their daily lives. The book of Hebrews says about the people who left Egypt with Moses, “The message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith” (Heb. 4:2). Without faith we cannot be saved, without faith we cannot live the Christian life and without faith we cannot please God. If we lack faith then like many of the Israelites in the wilderness we will perish without reaching the Promised Land.

3. In the third place, we learn that **God is kind and patient with His people when they are weak in their faith.** As we saw above, God expects us to walk with Him in faith. However, He knows that frequently our faith is weak and we allow circumstances around us to bring doubts into our minds. In these chapters that we are studying we read several times that the children of Israel grumbled against Moses and against God. We read verses like these: “So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What are we to drink?; In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we ate pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death'; They said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?'" (Ex. 15:24; 16:3; 17:3).

Not only did the children of Israel grumble against Moses and against God, they also disobeyed the word of God. In chapter 16 we are told that the Lord provided for them bread from heaven with the instruction that no one was to keep the bread until the following day since the Lord would provide for them each day. Yet we read, “Some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell” (Ex. 16:20). Also, they were given instructions not to go out on the Sabbath day as there would be no bread to collect, the bread provided the day before was to last two days. However, “some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none” (Ex. 16:27). They tested the Lord with their grumbling and their acts of disobedience, but the Lord did not destroy them. He was patient with them and listened to their complaints and provided for them graciously. This, of course, does not mean that there is nothing wrong with complaining or disobedience. They are both great sins and we need to make sure that we do not fall into such sins.

4. In the fourth place, we learn that **God provides leadership for His people.** In chapter 18, we read that Moses' father-in-law Jethro came to visit him. When he saw that Moses alone was serving as judge to settle disputes and to reveal the will of God to the people, Jethro said, “What you are doing is not good...select capable men from all the people...and appoint them as officials” (Ex. 18:17,21). Moses realised that this was good advice and so he followed it. He appointed other men and between them they judged cases among the people of Israel.

This is a good example for us to follow today among God's people. It is very tempting for the pastor of a church to think that he alone can lead the people of God and that he alone has the gifts and the abilities to teach them. But this is not true. It is actually a very dangerous thing for a man to be the sole leader of a church because he then becomes accountable to no one and can end up doing whatever he wants. There are, sadly, many cases like this where the pastor has abused his position and used his authority purely for his own gain and not for the benefit of the church. It is quite clear when we read the New Testament that churches are supposed to have several elders who are to serve as pastors and shepherd the church and not just one elder. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders rather than one elder for the newly planted churches during their first missionary journey (Acts 14:23); in Acts 20:17 we read that the church in Ephesus had elders rather than one elder, and that these elders were to be the pastors of the church (Acts 20:28); and it was to elders rather than an elder that Peter wrote his instructions in 1 Pet. 5:1-4. In each case it is assumed that a local church will have elders and these elders are the pastors of that church.

## Lesson Ten, Please read Exodus chapters 19-20

This is the final lesson in this study and in this lesson we look at these two very important chapters in the book of Exodus.

1. In the first place we see that **God enters into a covenant with the people of Israel**. A covenant, as we have seen, is a relationship in which both parties have responsibilities to each other. Here for the first time God enters into a covenant with the whole nation of Israel. Up to this point His covenant has been only with the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now He says to the nation of Israel, “If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5-6). We see here what the covenant between God and Israel meant. Israel was to be God's treasured possession, His own special people. He owns and governs and controls the whole earth and every nation in it, but He singled out Israel as His special people. He loved them and cared for them and provided for them and protected them. Israel, for their part, were expected to obey God fully and to walk with Him. With these words, a relationship between God and Israel was established: vows were made and a relationship was born. It is a little like a wedding ceremony where vows are exchanged and the couple is now a married couple.

Now with a wedding, once the couple has exchanged vows and have formally become a married couple then two things will happen:

- (i) The couple will begin to live together in the same house
- (ii) The couple needs to sort out some rules for how they are going to live together. The man cannot behave as if he is still single. He is now a married man and has responsibilities to his wife. Similarly the woman cannot behave as if she is still single. She now has responsibilities to her husband. So they have to sort out rules for how they are going to live together: where they will live, what sort of house they will have, who, if anyone, will live with them, whether they are going to have a maid, how much they will pay the maid, what time in the evening they will eat, who is to cook each day, what sort of food they will eat, what they will do at week-ends, which church they will attend, and so on. One of the main reasons why problems arise early in a marriage is because some of these issues have never been openly discussed. So the wife expects her husband to be at home most evenings to spend time with her, but he expects to be with his friends most evenings watching sport, and so on.

Now, once the covenant between God and Israel was established, these two matters were addressed. In the first place, God pledged to do something He had never done before: He pledged to come and live with His people and be there right in their midst. This is why in the rest of this book the people of Israel were given instructions to build the tent of meeting. Within the tent of meeting was a place called the holy of holies. This was to be

God's dwelling place, the place where God was.

Secondly, once the covenant was established, then God gave Israel the law. When we look carefully at the Law of God as revealed in the Old Testament, it becomes clear that there are two types of regulations:

- (i) There are laws given to guide and instruct the people of Israel, for instance, the Ten Commandments.
- (ii) There are laws given to restore the relationship between God and Israel when the people of Israel went away from the Lord and fell into sin, for example, the sacrificial system of the book of Leviticus. The fact that these regulations were given shows that God knew man's heart and He knew Israel could never keep the law, they would need a means whereby their sins were cleansed and they would be brought again into a proper relationship with God.

In the New Testament, God Himself has come to live in the midst of His people but in a much more powerful way. The Lord Jesus who is God Himself lived here on earth for over 30 years in the midst of His people. Then, when He ascended into heaven, He sent to them God the Holy Spirit who today lives in His people and in the midst of His people. This is why the New Testament does not place emphasis upon buildings. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.... A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (Jn. 4:21,23).

2. We see in the second place, that **God gave the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel**. In Exodus chapter 20 we have the first giving of the Ten Commandments, they were given a second time in Deuteronomy chapter five. There are three main reasons why God gave the Ten Commandments.

- (i) The first reason was that these laws reveal the holiness of God. The Bible tells us that God is holy and when we look at the Law of God we see His holiness. There are two things about the Law of God that we need to notice.

In the first place, we see from these laws that **God's holiness touches upon every area of our lives**. His Law touches upon our relationship with Him and our relationships with each other. Nothing is left out. In fact in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chapters 5-7) the Lord Jesus shows that the law of God even touches upon what goes on in our hearts and minds, so that even our sinful thoughts are judged. God is interested in every area of our lives. He is not like an employer who is only concerned that his employees come to the office on time and behave well during office hours. Most employers do not concern themselves with what their employees are doing after office hours, but with God there are no office hours, He is concerned with everything that we think and say and do.

In the second place, these laws reveal that God's holiness is uncompromising. He expects complete purity. He does not say, "Try your hardest to live a good life, and if you make a few mistakes here and there, it does not really matter." He says, "This is what I expect from you and nothing less than this. If you fall short of this by even a very little measure then you are a sinner." This is why the Bible says, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10).

(ii) The second reason why God gave the law was to reveal man's sinfulness. We all like to think the best of ourselves and we all like to say, "I am not really such a bad person. I know I am not perfect, but I am not a complete sinner." But the law was given to show us that we are bad. It was given to show us that we have fallen a long way short of God's standards. We are not to compare ourselves to other people, we are to compare ourselves to the Law of God. "Through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

(iii) Thirdly, the law was given to lead us to Christ. Paul says, "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). There are many people who think that the law of God was given to enable us to get to heaven. They think that if they do their best to keep the Ten Commandments then God will see that they have made a real effort and He will allow them into heaven as a reward. But the law was never given to save us. On the contrary, the law was given to show us that we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts. It was given to show us that we have fallen far short of the standards of God and that our own efforts will never save us. It was given to show us our need of Christ the Saviour sent from God. The law, therefore, is a little like a medical examination. A person is not feeling well so he goes to the doctor for a medical examination which will include blood tests and x-rays. The purpose of the medical examination is not to give him health. He cannot say, "I have had a medical check-up so now I will live a long life." The purpose of the examination was to show up what diseases he has so that he can go for treatment. The purpose of the law is not to give us salvation but to show up the fact that we are sinners. The law reveals that we have a very serious disease that is taking us to hell for eternity. It is designed to take us to the Great Physician of our souls, the Lord Jesus Christ who will grant us forgiveness when we go to Him by faith and will save us from our sins. This is why the law was given.

## Appendix One, The Trinity.

As we have seen, in the book of Exodus we learn much about God because God reveals Himself to us in this book. In fact, we can say that most of the things that we need to know about God are found in this book. There is, however, one aspect of God's character that is not found explicitly stated in the book of Exodus and that is the Trinity. In this appendix, therefore, we shall look briefly at this aspect of God's being.

### 1. The Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity can be stated briefly like this:

*"God exists eternally as three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully and eternally God and there is one God."*

You will see straightaway that to our limited human minds the doctrine of the Trinity does not seem to make sense. How can there be three Persons each of whom is fully and eternally God and yet there is one God? This is a question that has puzzled Christians for centuries and it is one of the things that false religions will use against Christians. So, for example, we are accused by various people of worshipping three gods. But this is not true. We worship the one true eternal God who exists eternally as three Persons. We cannot fully understand this but that does not mean that we should not believe it. After all, if God is God and we are mere human beings then it is hardly surprising that we do not fully understand Him! Also, if we worship and serve a god whom we understand fully and thoroughly then is it not very likely that the god we are worshipping and serving is not the One True Living God but an idol we have created in our finite minds? The fact remains that we love and serve One God who exists eternally as three Persons. We do not understand Him fully but we still love Him and serve Him because He is our Saviour and our Lord.

### 2. Does the Bible teach the Doctrine of the Trinity?

It is not our purpose here to give all the verses in the Bible which prove the doctrine of the Trinity. We have therefore picked out just a few verses from the many that show this doctrine to be biblical. Anyone who reads the Bible objectively will see at once that the Bible teaches these truths:

(i) There is One God. This is seen quite clearly in the words God gave to Moses: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4-5). The statement here is quite clear: there is one God.

(ii) The Father is God. Five times in the New Testament He is called God the Father: John 6:27; Titus 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:17 and Jude vs. 1-2.

(iii) The Son is God. These are some of the verses in the New Testament which state very clearly that the Lord Jesus Christ is God: John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-8; 9-11; 1 Thess. 3:13; Titus 2:13.

(iv) The Holy Spirit is God. In Ps. 139:7-8 and in Acts 5:3-4 it is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is God.

This is why we believe that each of the three Persons is eternally God and there is one God.

### **3. Some common mistakes Christians have made about the Trinity.**

Over the centuries as Christians have wrestled with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit they have made some mistakes in their understanding. Some of these mistakes are still with us today, and so we need to look at them.

(i) Some Christians have held the view that the three Persons in the Trinity are not equally God. They have stated that the Father is superior to the Son in His essential character and that the Holy Spirit is some sort of impersonal force rather than a divine Person. This is not what the Bible teaches. As we have seen above, each Person in the Godhead is fully and eternally God and so the three Persons are equal.

(ii) Some people have held the view that there is one Person rather than three Persons in the Godhead. And so they say that in the Old Testament He revealed Himself as the Father, in the gospels He revealed Himself as the Son and in Acts and today He reveals Himself as the Holy Spirit – one Person appearing in three different ways. Again, this is not true. God by definition is eternal. So if the Father is God then He is eternally God, if the Son is God then He is eternally God, He did not become God in the gospels.

(iii) Some people have held the view that the Son ceased to be God when He came to earth. They say that He took on human form and surrendered His divinity in doing so. Certainly it is not easy for us to understand fully the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we do know that He is eternally God and does not surrender His deity at any point. When He came to earth, He became fully man as well so that He was fully God and fully man: the fullness of God dwelt in Him (Col. 1:19).