

KINGDOM SPIRIT

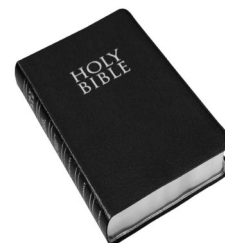
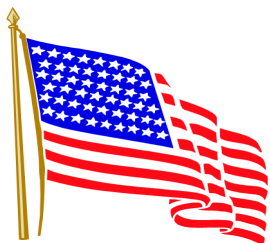
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"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Matthew 6:33



Issue 2205

IT'S THE LAW

Murder is the most serious of man against man sins. Of course death is the judgment for murder. This is verified in Ex. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:16-21; Num. 35:30-34 and Deut. 19:11-13. Is killing another person always murder? Not necessarily. There is the unintentional killing and the accidental killing. However, these types of killing still bear a judgment. Ex. 21:13 says, **"if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand"** God will appoint a place where the slayer can flee. Num. 35:22-28 tells us that if a man accidentally kills another and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm, then the congregation will judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood and the congregation shall deliver him out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and shall restore him to his city of refuge and he shall abide in it until the death of the high priest. However, if the slayer goes outside the bounds of that city before the death of the high priest, and the revenger of blood finds and kills him, the revenger of blood will not be held guilty for his blood.

We mentioned briefly the cities of refuge when we discussed the statutes. These were cities belonging to the Levites, set aside specifically for those who had killed someone, but were not guilty of murder, to go to for safety. We'll discuss a little later the different types of death sentences there are, but in the case of murder, the murderer is to be killed by the revenger of blood. Presumably, this is a next of kin to the victim. Anyone killing someone is entitled to a trial, but to have it he must be able to reach a city of refuge before the revenger of blood catches him. If he reaches the city, he can stay there until the trial. If the congregation determines, at the trial, he is guilty of murder, he is given into the hand of the revenger of blood. If the killing was not murder, he is delivered back to the city of refuge where he has to stay until the death of the high priest. His family can be with him and he is responsible for his own living, but he is safe

so long as he stays there. If he leaves after the death of the high priest, the revenger of blood cannot touch him without himself being guilty. (Deut. 19:4-6)

There are rules for the trial, however. Deut. 17:6-7 says that there has to be at least two witnesses before a person can be put to death for any crime. Num. 35:30-34 verifies this. Not in the case of murder, but in all other cases, the hands of the witnesses shall be the first to put the sinner to death.

Deut. 19:16-21 tells us that if a false witness rise up against a man to testify against him falsely, then the judges are to diligently enquire to determine the truth. If they find the man to have testified falsely, then he is to receive whatever judgment the man he testified against would have received, if he had been found guilty. If it is the death sentence, then he would be killed. Verse 21 says, **"And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."** Basically this means that the penalty shall fit the crime.

Deut. 24:16 tells us the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers. Every man is to be put to death for his own sin.

Another example of killing a person that isn't considered murder, it found in Ex. 22:2-4. If a thief is caught in the night, and is smitten that he dies, then the one killing him will not be guilty of murder. However, if the same thing happened in the daylight, then the one killing the thief would be guilty of murder.

If a man smites his servant so that he or she dies in the process, the man is to be put to death. But, if the servant lives for a day or two, he is not to be punished. His loss of property is his punishment. (Ex. 21:20-21)

If an ox gores a man or woman that they die, the ox is to be stoned. But if the ox had a record of trying to gore people, then the owner is to be put to death unless the next of kin are willing to accept a ransom for his life.

If the one killed is a servant, the owner is to pay his or her master 30 shekels of silver. But the ox

is to be stoned regardless. (Ex. 21:28-32)

There are a number of other capital crimes, or non-restorable crimes, which are crimes requiring the judgment of death. A man who smites his father or mother shall be put to death. (Ex. 21:15) The same applies to he that curseth his father or mother. (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9)

A witch, wizard, or one with a familiar spirit is to be stoned to death. (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27) A prophet or dreamer, who tries to lead people away from God is to be put to death. (Deut. 18:20-22) Even if one's brother, son, daughter, wife or friend tries to lead one away from God to other gods, they are to be put to death. (Deut. 13:6-11) One who lives among you, who has gone and worshipped other gods is to be stone to death. (Deut. 17:2-5) He that sacrificeth unto any god except unto the LORD only is to be destroyed. (Ex. 22:20) The same applies to anyone sacrificing their children to Molech. (Lev. 20:1-5)

Anyone working on the Sabbath is to be put to death. (Ex. 31:12-17; Ex. 35 2-3; Num. 15:32-36) A stranger coming near to the tabernacle was to be put to death. (Num. 18:7) Anyone who blasphemed the name of the LORD was to be stoned to death. (Lev. 24:14-16)

Anyone guilty of practicing homosexuality was to be put to death. (Lev. 20:13) The same applied to one guilty of sodomy. (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16) The daughter of any priest who profaned herself by playing the whore was to be burned with fire. I believe this means burning the body after death by stoning. (Lev. 21:9)

A stubborn and rebellious son who would not obey his father and mother, even when chastened, was to be stoned to death. (Deut. 21:18-21)

If a man married a wife and felt he had found her not to be a virgin, he was to bring her to the elders. It was up to her parents to prove that she was a virgin. If they failed to do so, she was to be stoned to death. If she was a virgin, the husband was to be fined 100 shekels of silver and the fine paid to the father and mother and the woman was to be his wife and he could not put her away. (Deut. 22:13-21)

Deut. 21:22-23 discusses the judgment of executing someone by hanging them on a tree. It does not tell us what sin is worthy of this type of death, but it does tell us that one killed this way was accursed. I think that the fact that Jesus Christ took on all the sins of the world, thus technically making him the very worst of criminals and was hung on the cross, I presume this was the judgment for the very worst of criminals. One who dies in this manner was not to have his body left on the tree overnight. He was to be buried on the same day.

In Deut. 13:12-18, we have a death penalty judgment that is to be carried out on a whole city. If

certain men, children of Belial, have gone into a city and drawn the inhabitants of that city to serve other gods, then a diligent search is to be made to see if it is so. If it is so, then the people are to go into the city and kill every living thing in the city, man and beast and burn it completely and not rebuild it.

That we might better understand all that Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, we need to fully understand these death penalties including which method of execution was to be used for each type of crime.

Once we see a principle established in God's Law, I believe we can rely on that principle to explain what is often unexplained. As we have already seen, and will continue to see as we study, the principle of God's Judgment laws is simply restitution. Applying this to the death penalty, it is at first a little difficult to see how the death of the criminal can restore the damage done by murder, rape, blasphemy, etc. But if we keep in mind that there will be an ultimate judgment, by God Himself, of all that men have done, would it not be reasonable to assume God can devise a judgment that can be restorative in nature? I believe He can, and will, even though we don't understand now how He can do it. If we are correct in this assumption, would it not be reasonable to also assume that the death penalty is more a "reserving for judgment" than the actual judgment itself. If effect, the death penalty might be a favor to the one who is guilty of a non-restorable crime, in that it limits to that point, what that person will have to answer for to God. Certainly, God can and does forgive, but we have to seek that forgiveness and be forgiving. One who does not do this, but continues to ignore God's laws, heaps more and more judgment upon his head. I think we need to consider this when we discuss the death penalty.

We're also told that the death penalty accomplishes a couple more things. First, it takes evil from the land. Second, it acts as a deterrent by making each of us more mindful of God's Law.

Let's look at some more judgments dealing with man damaging man physically. We'll see that the principle of restitution is applied everywhere possible. However, there are times when restitution is not appropriate and actual punishment of some kind is. That punishment may be quite severe, but keep in mind the intent is to deter sin.

Ex. 21:18-19 tells us that if one man injures another in a fight, but does not kill him, the one inflicting the injury is to pay all his medical costs, plus reimburse him for time lost.

If In the case of men striving together, a pregnant woman is injured in a manner that causes her to abort her baby, and there is no other problem, the man hurting her is to be punished according to the dictates of her husband and the judges. If there are other prob-

lems or mischief, then there is to be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Ex. 21:22-25) As I have mentioned before, this is simply saying that the punishment is to fit the crime.

If a man smites his servant so that he or she loses an eye or a tooth, he is to release the servant for his or her eye's sake or tooth's sake. (Ex. 21:26-27)

There are times when corporal punishment is a necessity, though we aren't given a specific example of what would happen for this to be the case. Deut. 25:2-3 tells us that forty stripes is the maximum amount that can be given.

Lev. 24:19-20 tells us that if a man causes a blemish in his neighbor, it is to be done to him as he has done, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.

Deut. 25:11-12 tells us that when men strive together with each other, and the wife of one attempts to help her husband and she reaches and take hold of the other man by "the secrets". Then her hand is to be cut off, and God says, "**thine eye shall not pity her.**"

There are some principles of law, dealing with destruction or damage to another's property, that are expressed in several of the Judgments. Ex. 21:33-34 says that if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, so that an ox or ass falls therein, the owner of the pit is to pay the owner of the animal for the animal and then the dead animal is his.

If one man's ox kills another man's ox, they are to sell the live ox and divide the money and the dead ox. However, if the ox had a history of being aggressive and his owner did not keep him penned up, he is to pay for the dead ox and the dead ox would be his. (Ex. 21:35-36)

If a man starts a fire that damages another's property, he that starts the fire is to make restitution for all the damage. (Ex. 22:6)

Ex. 22:14-15 tells us that if a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it gets hurt or dies, the owner not being with it, the borrower is to pay for it. If the owner is with it, the borrower does not have to pay for it. If it is hired. It came for his hire.

Lev. 24:18 says, "**And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.**" Lev. 24:21 confirms this.

We discussed in our look at the statutes the judgment of "cutting a person off from his people." It might be wise to review it again here. We're not told what all this means, or the duration, which leaves us to do some speculation. In several of the situations where this term is used, the crime is a non-restorable one, requiring the death penalty. Of course, one executed is cut off from his people. But one who is cut off for uncleanness, such as having touched a dead body, and hasn't gone through the cleansing process,

would logically be cut off only as long as he remained unclean.

As I stated before, I have concluded that being cut off basically is, in effect, having one's citizenship privileges cut off. If this is correct, the short-term effect is being cut off from the tabernacle, the presence of God and possibly missing a vote in a matter of community business. The long-term effect is being disinherited by God. The promises and the covenants, which convey the inheritance to the heirs, are made with the nation, not the individual. Therefore, if one is not in good standing as a citizen, using our current day terminology, he would not receive the inheritance when distributed in accordance with the promises and covenants. Basically, the ultimate distribution of the inheritance will be made to those having part in the first resurrection. It would seem logical then that anyone who dies in the cut-off state will not receive the inheritance.

It becomes incumbent upon us then to be sure what constitutes a sin that will cause one to be cut off. I might point out that most seem to be judgments that man is responsible to carry out, but not all. There are some that God Himself says He will do the "cutting off."

We can assume that all of the death penalty judgments constitute a cutting off. Let's look at some others. Lev. 7:22-25 says that anyone eating the fat that is supposed to be burned in the sacrifice of a beast, shall be cut off from his people. Lev. 7:26-27 and Lev. 17:10-14 tells us anyone eating blood, whether it be of fowl or beast, is to be cut off. Lev. 17:1-7 adds he who kills an ox, lamb, or goat and who doesn't bring it before the door of the tabernacle to offer an offering unto the LORD. Again, to the list is added he who offers a burnt offering, but does not bring it before the door of the tabernacle. (Lev. 17:8-9)

Lev. 18:28-29 refers to all of the sins of incest, sexual relations with a woman in her menstrual period, adultery, sacrificing children to Molech, homosexuality, and sodomy as grounds for being cut off. Some of these are temporary, some are permanent by death by execution.

Anyone eating of the peace offering, after the second day is to be cut off according to Lev. 19:5-8. Lev. 20:6 adds anyone that turns after such as have familiar spirits and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, shall be cut off.

Lev. 22:2-7 tells us, speaking of Aaron and his seed, "**Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence, I am the LORD.**"

The leper, he that has a running issue, he that touches anything unclean by the dead, a man whose seed goes from him, anyone touching any creeping thing whereby he may be made unclean, or touching a man who is unclean, are all included in those who are unclean. Certainly, with the exception of the leper or one that has a running issue, for most of these, we're told a man can wash his flesh with water and he shall be clean when the sun goeth down. But, if he fails to do so, he remains unclean. Lev. 22:9 says they shall keep His ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die if they profane it.

Num. 15:30-31 says that he who sins presumptuously (or intentionally) shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

Num. 19:11-22 lists anyone who is unclean by reason of the dead having touched the body, the grave or anything that might have touched the dead, and says, they shall be unclean seven days. Cleansing is by being sprinkled with water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer on the third and seventh day, and washing himself and his clothes. Failure to do so means being cut off from the congregation.

Looking at some of the other judgments, Ex. 22:16-17 and Deut. 22:28-29 deals with something few people realize today. They both tell us that if a man entice a virgin who is not betrothed and lie with her, she is his wife and he may not put her away. He is to pay her father fifty shekels of silver. I believe this tells us that regardless of ceremony or lack thereof, marriage was initiated with the sexual act. When we have the promiscuous society we have today, according to this law, we have many couples technically married to each other who in turn commit adultery by marrying or having affairs with someone else. I fear God has not hidden His face from this wickedness.

Another judgment having to do with marriage is found in Deut. 25:5-10. It concerns a man who marries and then dies before having any children. His wife is not to re-marry outside of the family. Instead, she is to marry the man's brother and their first son is to take the name and inherit the inheritance of the first husband of the woman. The judgment comes if the brother refuses to do so. If this be the case, she is to state to the elders what has happened. If the brother tells them he refuses to marry her, then the woman is to come into his presence, loosen his shoe from off his foot, spit into his face and say, **"So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed."**

There are also instructions to the judges. Lev. 19:15 says, **"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."**

If a matter was too difficult to be solved locally, they were to take it to a higher court, so to speak. Deut. 17:8-13 says to take it to the place where the LORD shall choose, to the priest and the judge.

We also find here the judgment for contempt of court. Whatever the judge and the priest gave as a sentence, it was to be carried out. The man who refused to do so was to die.

Also a person hears or sees an event or who has taken an oath about an event he has witnessed, if he will not tell what he witnessed, it is a sin to him and Lev. 5:1 tells us he shall bear his iniquity. In the same light, someone who has heard and/or delights in something injurious to his neighbor by it being reported, but hides the truth is guilty. (Lev. 5:4) They are to bring a sin offering and a burnt offering to the priest for their sin. (Lev. 5:5-13) Deut. 24:17-18 says not to pervert the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless or the widow. Deut. 25:1 instructs the judges to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked in cases brought before them.

There are a number of times that God will be the judge and will deliver the judgment. Ex. 20:7 and Deut. 5:11 tells us God will not hold anyone taking His name in vain guiltless for doing so. Ex. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16 indicate God will prolong the life of those who honor their father and mother.

God says He will kill with the sword if He hears the cry of affliction from the widow or the fatherless. (Ex. 22:22-24) He also says He will hear those who have been oppressed by those charging usury and taking pledges for loans from the poor. (Ex. 22:25-27)

Ex. 23:24-25 says God will take away sickness and bless their bread and water when Israel serves her God. Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 7:12-16; Deut. 11:13-17 and Deut. 28:1-14 promise great blessings if Israel obeys God. But Lev. 26:14-39 and Deut. 28:15-68 promise severe curses in judgment if they do not hearken to His laws and obey them. However, if He brings these curses upon them and they be driven from their land; if they humble themselves before Him and confess their iniquity, He will remember His covenant with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham and He will remember the land. He promises never to utterly destroy them, or to break His covenant with them. (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 4:29-31)

However, Deut. 4:25-28 and Deut. 8:19-20 says that no matter how long they are in the land, if they make a graven image, or the likeness of anything and do evil in the sight of God, He will cast them out of the land and they will be scattered among the nations.

He tells Israel in Deut. 11:18-21, their days will be multiplied if they lay the words of God's Law in their hearts and minds, teach them to their children,

and post them in their houses.

We'll end this study of the Judgments with Deut. 11:26-28, "**Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the ways which I command you this day, to do after other gods, which ye have not known.**"

We will take up ordinances in our next issue. JRL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

We want to begin a study of the book of Hebrews with this lesson. But before we begin our study of the scriptures, I would like to have us take a look at the situation that existed at the time of the writing. Israel was coming out of their Assyrian/Babylonian captivity but had lost their identity and were, and had been, moving across Asia Minor in groups with various names but all seemed to be heading in the same general direction—west. As we have discussed in our study of the Pauline Epistles, for the most part, these are the "gentiles" to whom Paul was an apostle. Jesus said in Matt. 15:24, "**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" This was not to the Jews (descendants of the Kingdom of Judah) for they knew who they were and where they were, but rather to the people Paul and other apostles and missionaries went to.

The Jews were split into three groups so far as Christianity was concerned. There were those who totally rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah, those who were converted totally to Christianity (the New Covenant) and those who were somewhat converted to Christianity but wanted to stay with the Old Covenant as well and try to combine the two. It was this latter group that gave Paul so hard a time. If I am correct as to Paul being the author of Hebrews, I believe it is to this latter group that the book of Hebrews was written to. The following will attempt to explain why, but I think we need to approach the book with this in mind. However, it is also appropriate to apply it to our modern era as well since we have the same problem in our churches today, but with a little different name and application.

Hebrews is unique in that the author is anonymous. However, many scholars believe that it was written by the apostle Paul and give several reasons for their view. One of the most enlightening may be what the Bishop of Caesarea, writing in the fourth century, took from a book written (now lost) by Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-c. 220 A.D.) Clement's full name was Titus Flavius Clement, and he succeeded Pantaenus as head of the Church school at Alexandria in 190 A.D. The name of the book, or series of books that Clement wrote is Hypotyposes. Following is the comment of the Bishop of Caesarea: "*And in the Hypotyposes, in a word, he [Clement] has made abbreviated narratives of the whole testamentary Scripture; and has not passed over the disputed books—I mean Jude and the rest of the Catholic Epistles and Barnabas, and what is called the Revelation of Peter. And he says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's, and was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke, having carefully translated it, gave it to the Greeks, and hence the same colouring in the expression is discoverable in this Epistle and the Acts; and that the name 'Paul an Apostle' was very properly not prefixed, for, he says, that writing to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced against him and suspected, he with great wisdom did not repel them in the beginning by putting down his name...*"

"*And now, as the blessed Presbyter used to say, since the Lord, as the Apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, as having been sent to the Gentiles, did not subscribe himself apostle to the Hebrews, out of modesty and reverence for the Lord, and because, being the herald and apostle of the Gentiles, his writing to the Hebrews was something over and above [his assigned function].*" (Vol. VI, 14)

As you can see, Clement's educated belief (he was writing a little over 100 years from the writing of the book of Hebrews) was that the book was written by Paul, but because the Hebrews were outside his calling to minister to the Gentiles, Paul did not put his name to the epistle.

It would be well to remember that while a fairly large number of Jews became Christians, a large number of them wanted to add Christ to their Judaism religion rather than make a clean break from Judaism. These people were enemies of Paul as we read in particular in the book of Galatians where Paul contended with them at length.

The theme of the book of Hebrews is basically to show how much better the New Covenant is than the Old Covenant, so to those who wanted to try to combine the two, Paul was their enemy, so to present his message without revealing his authorship seemed the proper thing to do according to Clement.

One other reason why many believe Paul to be the author of Hebrews is that in verse 23 of chapter 13, the author indicates a close relationship with Timothy and announces that Timothy had been released from prison. In verse 24 then, the author indicates that he is writing this from Italy. Since Paul and Timothy were very close to each other and that Paul was in prison in Rome at the time this letter was supposed to be written, these two facts seem to tie Paul to the authorship of the letter.

To me, the kind of thinking that is exhibited in this letter is very similar to how we saw Paul's thinking in other epistles, such as the one to the Romans and to the Galatians. I have read several of the claims that this epistle was not written by Paul. I did not find any, in my mind, that were that credible, though they were written by men that I am sure were more intelligent than I. Some, in my mind, did more to prove that Paul did write it than they did to prove he did not. While the Pauline authorship is denied by many modern scholars, it still makes sense to me that Paul wrote it, so, through this study, I am going to assume Paul to be the author.

The title is simply "An Epistle to the Hebrews." I believe it will help our overall understanding of the book if we look at the word "Hebrews" before we begin. Following is the definition I found in the *Smith's Bible Dictionary*: **HEBREW** *This word first occurs as given to Abram by the Canaanites, [Gene 14:13](#) because he had crossed the Euphrates. The name is also derived from Eber, "beyond, on the other side," Abraham and his posterity being called Hebrews in order to express a distinction between the races east and west of the Euphrates. It may also be derived from Heber, one of the ancestors of Abraham. [Gene 10:24](#) The term Israelite was used by the Jews of themselves among themselves; the term Hebrew was the name by which they were known to foreigners. The latter was accepted by the Jews in their external relations; and after the general substitution of the word Jew, it still found a place in that marked and special feature of national contradistinction, the language.*

So we see that one can be a Hebrew two different ways, by being descended from Heber or Eber and being either from another place or going to a different place, i.e. being an immigrant. Abraham would have been a Hebrew by both of these definitions. He was descended from Heber and he was an immigrant, i.e. he had come from the Tigris-Euphrates valley going to the land of Canaan. One way is by choice, the

other there is no choice. It is like to old saying, "you can pick your friends, but you are stuck with your relatives."

I think we will see that both definitions will apply to the name as we study the book of Hebrews. It was written to people who were descended from Heber but it is written to people who were going from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. The point that Paul makes is that you can't mix the two covenants just as Abraham couldn't move to Canaan and then take it back with him to the Mesopotamian area and live in both areas at the same time. You have to live in one place or the other; you either have to live under the Old Covenant or under the New Covenant. Paul has made this point in other epistles, especially the epistle to the Galatians, but he spells it out in more detail in the book of Hebrews. The fact that the epistle is not titled "An Epistle to the Jews" or "An Epistle to the Israelites," but rather "An Epistle to the Hebrews" is significant for this reason.

The book of Hebrews assumes that its readers are familiar with the temple rituals and the Scriptures that had long been recognized as applying to the Messiah. The Jews of Paul's day were familiar with these, but we today are unprepared to read the book because we are not familiar with these rituals and Scriptures. I found a brief introduction to Hebrews that Dr. Stephen Jones presented in a study of the book of Hebrews that he did that I think will be worthwhile for us to look at before we begin our study. Following is a portion of that introduction:

"The 40- Year Transition

"Any time there is a religious division, there is an inevitable dispute as to which group is the heir of God's calling or blessing. In the first 40 years of transition in the early Church, many considered these "Nazarenes" to be just another sect of Judaism, like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. But the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. destroyed their center of worship and shattered the foundations of their belief system. They were forced to reconcile their deep faith in the temple with the obvious fact that God had allowed or caused its destruction.

"What sin had brought about these events? To the Jews who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the explanation was that somehow they must have left some ritual undone. Many blamed the fanatics (the *Sicarii*) among them for their murderous policies. But this situation forced the Nazarenes to the conclusion that the temple was judged because of the national and priestly rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

"The destruction of the temple was difficult for these Judean Nazarenes, because they had been unwilling to make a clean break with the temple. They were attempting to Christianize Judaism from within,

whereas it was obvious that God had given the nation just 40 years in which to repent of its rejection of Jesus. Then came judgment. And in that judgment, their dependence upon the temple and its old system was shattered.

“From that time on, the Nazarene view lost most of its credibility, for it was clear that God had destroyed the temple, even as Jesus had prophesied in his parable in Matthew 22:1-7, where it speaks of a certain king (God) sending his slaves (i.e., the prophets) to invite people to the wedding of his son (Jesus). Verses 5-7 say,

⁵ But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ But the king was enraged and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

“It was clear that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. fulfilled this prophetic parable—at least in part, for we believe that there is yet another occasion when Jerusalem will be destroyed and never again be rebuilt (Jer. 19:10, 11). The Nazarenes could not help but recognize this fact after 70 A.D.

“If the book of Hebrews was truly written by the Apostle Paul, then it must have been written between 60 and 64 A.D. in anticipation of Jerusalem's destruction. Perhaps Paul saw the end coming and knew how this had the potential of shattering the faith of those Judean Nazarenes. We suggest that this could well have been Paul's reason for stepping outside of his primary calling to write such a book. After all, no epistle had yet been written to fully explain why the Christians ought to separate from the old order of the temple in Jerusalem.

Which Mother Can Bring Forth the Heir?

“In many ways the book of Hebrews is an extension of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:22-26,

²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the freewoman. ²³ But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the freewoman through the promise. ²⁴ This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

“Paul's interpretation of the historical allegory is that Hagar represents the Old Covenant. This is shown by the fact that Sinai was in Arabia, the inheritance of Ishmael. Since Jerusalem had chosen to remain under the jurisdiction of the Old Covenant made

at Mount Sinai in Arabia, they had proven themselves to be of Hagar, not of Sarah. And Hagar's son, Ishmael, represented by the temple priests and all the adherents of Judaism, were not the heirs of the promise.

“By way of contrast, Sarah represents the New Jerusalem with its New Covenant, and the children of Sarah are those who believe in its Mediator, Jesus Christ. Paul's admonition is given in Galatians 4:28-31,

²⁸ And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman. ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free woman.

“It was difficult for the Judean Nazarenes to break their religious, cultural, and family ties with the temple and its religious system. Yet it was necessary. It was just as difficult for Abraham to forsake his roots in Ur of the Chaldees and go to an unknown land. It took real faith for him to do that. In both Galatians and Hebrews, the Apostle Paul was challenging the Nazarenes to follow Abraham's example. He knew it was not easy, but he knew it was the only way to inherit the promise.

“With the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the prospect of a new Jewish temple being built upon the old site in Jerusalem, many Christians have begun to think of the early Nazarenes as being right after all. Many are looking for their “Jewish roots.” Many once again think of Christianity as a sect of Judaism. They look to the old city of Jerusalem as Sarah, rather than as Hagar. They think of the adherents of Judaism as being the heirs of the promise, the chosen seed, the “Isaac” company. They believe that the Jews as a whole will soon come to believe that Jesus really was the Messiah. Then they envision the Jews adding Jesus to their Judaism in precisely the same manner as the early Nazarenes attempted in the first century.

“They envision another physical temple being built out of wood and stone on the old temple site in the old Jerusalem. They envision another Levitical priesthood being established, complete with animal sacrifices. Years ago, I was astonished to hear this view from the lips of a Baptist minister. He obviously did not understand either Galatians or the book of Hebrews.

sacrifices. Years ago, I was astonished to hear this view from the lips of a Baptist minister. He obviously did not understand either Galatians or the book of Hebrews.

“To return to the “Jewish roots” of the Church is comparable to welcoming Hagar back to the household and establishing Ishmael as the heir. Will God take as His heir the very one who persecuted Isaac? Never. The only way to be chosen is through Jesus Christ. When the Jews as a nation and as a religion rejected the Mediator of the New Covenant, they opted to remain under the Old Covenant, which is in Arabia (Gal. 4:25). Arabia was the inheritance of Ishmael. In rejecting Jesus, they placed Jerusalem and its temple under the legal jurisdiction of Mount Sinai in Arabia—and hence, without realizing it, they gave that place to Ishmael. As a consequence, God expelled them and ultimately gave that place to the children of Ishmael.

“To return to “Jewish roots” is also comparable to Abraham returning to Ur of the Chaldees, rejecting the promise that God had for him outside of his father’s house. It may seem harsh to “*cast out the bondwoman and her son,*” but we must know that we cannot have one foot in Judaism and the other foot in Christianity. Only one mother can bring forth the promised seed. It is either the Old Jerusalem or the New. Only one covenant can save men—and it is NOT the Old Covenant. Ishmael and Isaac cannot long coexist in the same household. Only one child can be the heir. Jews who reject Jesus Christ are NOT the heirs. They are NOT chosen, for Jesus specifically said of them in Matthew 21:43,

⁴³ Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

“Like the tribes of Israel eight centuries earlier, God rejected Judah and removed His glory from among them. All of them were cast off. And the only way to be re-instated in the covenant with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. No one will be saved apart from Him, whether Jew, Israelite, or any other on the face of the earth. It is a fallacy to say that a Jew who rejects Jesus Christ is “chosen” or that he re-

mains in a covenant relationship with God. The Old Covenant was broken and was legally abrogated. Only the New Covenant now has any force in the sight of God. In Hebrews 8, after describing the New Covenant, we read in verse 13, “**When He said, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.**” “

This has perhaps been a rather long introduction to this epistle, but because we have been studying Paul’s epistles to the Gentiles for the past few months, and this epistle takes a fairly radical turn in addressing the Hebrews, by both definitions, I felt we needed a little more information before we got into our study of the text. I am indebted to Dr. Jones for much of this information, but as I sought to verify some of the information that was new to me, I found that much of the information is available from different sources, but I also found a lack of understanding of the intent of the book of Hebrews among many that had the information, but no knowledge of how to use it. This came as a bit of a surprise to me. It has been discouraging to me through the years, as I have studied the Bible, that a good deal of the scholars who write on Bible study, seem to consider it their duty to criticize rather than to look at the message itself in a positive light. The Bible itself, to me, is the outline of God’s plan and purpose for man and it is very positive, but if the only intent is to criticize, it can be very negative and it is this negative feeling I get when I look at a lot of the Bible commentary available today. It is either extremely shallow, or very negative. This is not God’s intent in giving us this wonderful book. We’ll begin with Heb. 1:1 in our next lesson. JRL

“Fret not thy self because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as a green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thy self also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; And he shall bring it to pass.” Psalms 37:1-5

**But, Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
And His Righteousness
And all these things shall be
Added unto you. Matt. 6:33**