

MICA (P) 245/09/2008

DAILY *manna*

APRIL – JUNE 2009

GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

It is a joy to bring to you the *Daily Manna* . Over the next quarter, we will begin our journey through the historical books of the Bible beginning with Joshua. It is our prayer is that the accounts of God's dealings with His people will give precious lessons of His covenantal faithfulness.

We have increased our print run to meet to increased demand for the *Daily Manna* . We thank God for the wonderful and encouraging response that we have received from you. Please continue write us with your feedback. Please continue to pray for the contributors and editors of the *Daily Manna*.

The *Daily Manna* has been translated into the Thai language and finding wide acceptance amongst the Thai Christians. God willing, a yearly collection of *Daily Manna* readings will also be published in Chinese in September 2009. And we pray that God will continue to bless you as you continue in your spiritual journey through with the *Daily Manna*.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you'll find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. *Daily Manna* highlights practical lessons from the day's Bible passages to make your reading through God's Word a meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in depth study of the OT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you've just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

In His grace,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Numbers 1

LESSON

Numbered for war

VERSE 3

*From twenty years old
and upward, all that are
able to go forth to war in
Israel: thou and Aaron
shall number them by their
armies.*

The title “Numbers” comes from the two “numberings” or census that took place during the 40 years that the Jews were wandering in the wilderness. The first census took place at the beginning of the 40 years. The second took place at the end, as the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land.

The two numberings are key to understanding the Book of Numbers. The first census [v. 1–4] concerns the first generation of the people who left Egypt but did not make it to the Promised Land because of their lack of faith. The second census [v. 26] focuses on the second generation. These were the ones who made it through the 40 years in the desert.

The census was taken only of men 20 years and older not because women were discriminated against but because it was a numbering of men who were able to battle. Standing on the threshold of the Promised Land, the Israelites were told to prepare for war. The phrase “able to go forth to war” is used 15 times in Numbers. This second generation was now given the same opportunity as their parents 40 years ago. They could succeed where their parents had failed if they listened to the Word of God.

This is not to say that they would have it easy and conquer the land by their own strength. They must be prepared to “go forth to war”. However, faith in God is still the key to victory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 7

THOUGHT

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” [1 John 5:4]. Be trained. Be equipped. Be faithful. Be prepared to serve.

BIBLE LESSON

Numbers 2

LESSON

The standard of the camp

VERSE 2

Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.

The camp was arranged according to the instructions of God. Nothing was left to the devices and design of men. The tabernacle that housed the Ark of Covenant and represented the presence of God was situated in the centre of the camp. The tribes, excluding the Levites, were divided into four groups, with three tribes on each side of the tabernacle. When the camp moved, the tabernacle, carried by the priests, moved before them. When the camp rested, the tabernacle was placed in the centre of the camp.

Each tribe also had its own ensign—a symbol by which the tribe was known. Every three tribes had its own standard. This ensign and the standard served as an identity for its people. Each man knew exactly where he was supposed to go.

Without this divine layout, the 12 tribes of Israel would be a messy mob. This pattern implies discipline, cooperation and commitment to a communal relationship. This arrangement also meant that each tribe had a responsibility to one another. If one tribe was derelict in his duty, the whole camp was endangered. If one tribe slowed down, the other 11 tribes were also hindered.

God was about to lead Israel into the Promised Land but her success as a nation depended on their understanding of their relationship with one another and to God. So it is with the church and the covenant home. Corporate unity and solidarity is vital to the work of the church.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 8

THOUGHT

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. – Philippians 1:27

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 3***LESSON****The firstborn****VERSE 8**

*And they shall keep
all the instruments of
the tabernacle of the
congregation, and the
charge of the children of
Israel, to do the service of
the tabernacle.*

Numbers 3–4 are devoted to the Levites. Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” [Exodus 19:6] but God also gave the Levites a special priestly responsibility to remind the people to obey His law and bear testimony to His goodness and holiness.

The three descendants of Levi included Gershon, Kohath and Merari, and each of these families had a special work in the tabernacle. The sons of Gershon were responsible for transporting the coverings and the framework of the tabernacle [v. 21–26]. The Kohathites’ job was to carry the furniture in the tabernacle [v. 27–32]. The Merarites were responsible for the heavy boards of the tabernacle [v. 33–37].

These instructions concerning the work of the Levites give us several lessons on Christian service. First, God uses people in His work. There ought to be no idle worshipper in the church. Second, the details tell us that God is concerned about how the work is being done. Just as He had appointed the people, God also appointed the methodology. God’s work must be done in God’s way.

Third, there is mutual dependency in God’s work. The sons of Levi did not all do the same work. They had their own individual responsibilities, but they could not do without one another. The tabernacle could not be set up if one of the sons of Levi had neglected his duty. In the same way, the work of the church progresses with every believer giving his best to the work of the Gospel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 9

THOUGHT

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. – 1 Corinthians 3:9

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 4***LESSON****The sons of Kohath****VERSE 19**

*But thus do unto them,
that they may live, and not
die, when they approach
unto the most holy things:
Aaron and his sons shall go
in, and appoint them every
one to his service and to his
burden.*

In Chapter 3, the sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath and Merari—were mentioned in the order of their ages. In Chapter 4, the order was Kohath, Gershon and Merari, in the order of the sacredness of the things that they were placed in charge of.

The Kohathites, who included Moses, Aaron and the priests, were in charge of the furniture in the tabernacle, including the Ark of Covenant. Special care and attention had to be given in the moving of the furniture of the tabernacle, which were considered “the most holy things” [v. 4]. The Kohathites could not touch or even see the holy items. Doing so would result in death [v. 15, 20]. They had to carry the furniture themselves, whereas the sons of Gershon and Merari were given wagons to move the coverings and the boards of the tabernacle [v. 7]

There is a difference in the work responsibilities of the sons of Levi. While they were all equally consecrated for God’s service, they did not all have exactly the same work. Thus, we must not regard the Kohathites as being more important than the Gershonites and Merarites. The sons of Kohath had a heavier burden but all work in the kingdom of God is royal service.

Likewise in our service for God, every believer must serve according to his calling and task. Every Christian has a role to play in God’s kingdom, and God has made the members of His Church dependent on one another.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 10-11

THOUGHT

God has a calling for every believer, but not every believer has the same calling. Be faithful to the present calling in which God has put you.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 5***LESSON****Cleanliness is next to holiness****VERSE 2**

Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead.

In this chapter, God focuses on the purity of the people within the camp. As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, certain people—lepers, those with a discharge, and priests who had touched a dead body—were commanded to be put out of the camp until they were ceremonially clean. This act served to remind the people that God is holy, and He commands the people to be holy [Leviticus 20:7].

This separation did not mean that those people were great sinners, but leprosy and corpses were reminders of the nature and effects of sin.

Leprosy is a picture of our sin nature. Just as a leper does not “choose” to have the disease but contracts it, so we did not choose a sin nature but inherited it from Adam. We are sinners because we commit acts of sin and also because we have inherited the sin nature.

The reason for this command of separation is that God dwells “in the midst” [v. 3] of the camp. God wants to dwell in us too. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit [1 Corinthians 6:19]. God is concerned with our acts of sin and our sin nature. Our Lord Jesus is the One who can change our sin nature. Our old man is crucified with Christ [Galatians 2:20] and we must put on the new man [Ephesians 4:24]. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” [2 Corinthians 5:17a].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 12-13

THOUGHT

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” [1 Corinthians 6:9a]. There are no sinless Christians on this side of eternity, but neither should there be habitually sinning ones.

BIBLE LESSON

Numbers 6

LESSON

Be holy unto the Lord

VERSE 8

All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD.

The word “Nazarite” comes from the word meaning “to separate” or “to consecrate”. Nazarites were men or women who had separated and dedicated themselves wholly to God. Their dedication could be for a certain period of time or for life. It was God’s desire that His people be Nazarites [Amos 2:11].

A Nazarite takes a vow so that “all the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord” [v. 8]. By making the vow, a Nazarite promised to refrain from certain activities. He was not to drink wine, strong drink, or vinegar of wine and grapes. These drinks are associated with worldly pleasures and enjoyment. He was not to cut his hair, which was an external evidence of his dedication to the Lord. A Nazarite also could not touch a corpse, even that of a close relative. To do so would make him unclean.

The first and last promises are applicable to Christians too. By pursuing fleshly pleasures and living in unholiness, we are not separated from the world’s values. This is usually the first step in backsliding. When we neglect God, skip worship and do not pray, it will not be long before we lose communion with our Saviour.

In the benediction [v. 24–26], our Triune God blesses us individually. It is always assuring to receive the benediction at the worship service. Let us take up God’s gracious invitation to dedicate and separate ourselves wholly to Him and receive His many blessings.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 14

PRAYER

Lord, I want to consecrate myself to You and be holy to You for the rest of my life. Please give me strength to fulfil my vow.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 7–8*

LESSON

**Vessels fit for the
Master's use****NUMBERS 8:3**

*And Aaron did so; he
lighted the lamps thereof
over against the candlestick,
as the LORD commanded
Moses.*

Numbers 7 lists the gifts offered by the Israelites for the dedication of the altar when the tabernacle was set up. The next chapter relates the dedication of the Levites. The tabernacle was set up in the first month of the second year after leaving Egypt [Exodus 40:17]. The tabernacle, all the instruments, the altar and all the vessels were anointed and sanctified. The leaders of the 12 tribes of Israelites each brought the same gifts and in the same amount to offer to the Lord. Their gifts included one kid goat for a sin offering.

In Chapter 8, Aaron was commanded to light the seven lamps of the candlestick, which was at the holy place in the tabernacle. There was no window at the holy place and the only source of light was from the seven lamps. Aaron was given the responsibility to light the lamps and keep them shining continually [Leviticus 24:1–3].

God also commanded Moses to dedicate the Levites to the Lord to wholly serve Him in the tabernacle. The Levites were to be cleansed and purified before they could serve.

God had intended Israel to be “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” [Exodus 19:6]. As Christians, we are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation” unto our God [1 Peter 2:9]. He has given us the privilege to serve Him and keep His Church shining in this world. But, like the Levites, we must be sanctified and holy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 15

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, make me a vessel fit for Thy use.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 9***LESSON****Our Lord is so good
to us****VERSE 23**

*At the commandment
of the LORD they rested
in the tents, and at the
commandment of the LORD
they journeyed: they kept
the charge of the LORD, at
the commandment of the
LORD by the hand of Moses.*

The Lord commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover, which was for remembering God's deliverance of the Israelites from bondage from Egypt. Our Lord Jesus is the Passover Lamb [John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7]. Our Lord sacrificed His life on the Cross to deliver us from the bondage of sin and condemnation.

While we do not observe the Jewish Passover, our Lord Jesus has given us the Lord's Supper to remember His love for us. To be present at the Lord's Table shows our gratitude for His saving grace. To neglect the Passover is to dishonour God. We must always endeavour to be present at the Lord's Table.

The Lord guides us [v. 15–23]. For some 40 years, the Lord provided a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide the Israelites through the wilderness. At the “commandment of the Lord”—a phrase which appears seven times—the people journeyed or they rested. Had they relied on their own strength to move around the wilderness, they would have lost their way. The pillar of cloud provided shade in the day and the pillar of fire provided heat at night. God is gracious. He provided for their needs. When they followed Him, they would reach the Promised Land.

God is just as gracious to us. Without Him, we may find the world but lose our way. With Him, we can walk in His path of righteousness.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 16**

PRAYER

**O Lord, let me walk according to Your
commandment.**

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 10***LESSON****The trumpets of the Lord****VERSE 33**

And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

The sounding of the trumpets was the responsibility of the priests. The trumpets were used as instruments of communication. The trumpets had a different sound for the Israelites to do different things. They could be used to summon a gathering of the congregation or leaders of the tribes, give direction to the congregation to move in an orderly manner or to go to war, and call the people to worship.

When the trumpets sound, they were to congregate and gather with the people of God. On every Lord's Day worship services, the call to worship serves the same purpose. It summons us to come before God in worship.

The sound of the trumpets can be likened to the preaching of the Word. When the Israelites were oppressed, the trumpets would be sounded, and they would be delivered. In times of celebration, the trumpets would also be sounded for a time of thanksgiving. Numbers 10 records the journey taken by the people of Israel as they moved about in the wilderness. They had been at Mount Sinai for nearly a year. While Mount Sinai had provided for them a good resting place, it was not the Promised Land.

God leads and, as His children, we are to follow His calling and journey at His bidding, even if we have to leave our comfort zone. But we are confident that God will always lead us to the place that is best for us.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 17**

CHALLENGE

We must be found in the house of the Lord every Lord's Day.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 11*

LESSON

**The people
complained**

VERSE 23

And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

After three days of journey, the people complained. There was no mention of the nature of their first complaint [v. 1–3], though it was an evil complaint that God heard. The second complaint was about food. They were not contented with the manna provided by God and pined for food they had in Egypt. The cause of their complaint was that they felt God had been cruel to them.

The Lord said that the people actually despised Him. Verse 20 reads: “Because ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?” They were finding fault with God. They said that God was really not who He had claimed Himself to be. On both occasions, God was displeased and chastised them.

Church leaders and parents are constantly facing pressures and challenges from members and children. Moses had to deal with a stiff-necked people. The whole congregation was crying and craving for food that they had previously eaten when they were slaves in Egypt. Moses was upset but God helped Moses by dealing directly with the people.

We, too, have to learn to be content, and not to follow peer pressure nor give in to worldly lust. Be discerning and ensure that your wants and desires do not originate from mixed multitudes that have no personal knowledge of our Saviour. Instead of complaining, learn to cast “all your care upon Him, for He careth for you” [1 Peter 5:7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 18–19

CHALLENGE

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 12*

LESSON

The danger of pride

VERSE 1

*And Miriam and Aaron
spoke against Moses
because of the Ethiopian
woman whom he had
married: for he had
married an Ethiopian
woman.*

Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses over two issues—about his marriage to an Ethiopian woman [v. 1] and about his government [v. 2]. Miriam was the chief instigator of this confrontation and influenced Aaron. She accused Moses of claiming authority without consulting her. Miriam thought she had the same exclusive power that Moses had [Exodus 15:20]. She was unhappy that Moses had “claimed” all the power to himself. It was Miriam’s pride that sealed her downfall. God, Who heard everything, counted Moses faithful and judged Miriam.

A similar case—the rebellion of Korah—is mentioned in Numbers 16. Striving to be greatest is a sin that can easily plague God’s people, and it displeases God. Satan’s downfall came about when he wanted God’s throne, forgetting that he was simply a created being. The hunger for power leads to pride and blinds a person to all else.

Christendom is not spared this malaise. In Matthew 20:20, we read of the mother of James and John asking Jesus to grant her sons key positions in our Lord’s kingdom. Such an ignorant request stemmed from a desire for honour and promotion. Rebuking the ignorance and error of their request, our Lord replied, “Ye know not what ye ask.”

Pride is a sin that is hard to get rid of. We must remember where we stand in the spiritual hierarchy. Christ is Lord of all and we are His servants. Whatever position He assigns to us, the basic principle applies. We are to humble our hearts and serve faithfully.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 20-21

THOUGHT

It is not what men think of you but what God knows of you that counts.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 13*

LESSON

The tale of 12 spies

VERSE 32

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

It was an exciting time for the Israelites as they sought to know the blessings awaiting them in the Promised Land. One man from each tribe was chosen for the mission. The spies located the land by going southward, which was a dry desert region, and up into the mountain, where they could accurately survey the area. They were to enquire concerning the land and concerning the inhabitants.

After 40 days, the Israelites received news. Initially, a good first impression was given. The spies returned with a bunch of grapes and some other fruits of the land. The cluster of grapes was so huge and heavy that they hung it on a staff and carried it between two men. However, this positive impression was soon clouded by the spies' negative remarks that the place was too difficult to conquer [v. 28].

God was displeased with their exaggerated accounts. They poisoned the people's minds to discourage them from proceeding. Fear overcame the Israelites. It translated into excuses and rebellion. They had placed more confidence in men's judgement than in God's promise.

Do you wholly trust God to see you through your challenges? God has said, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" [Jeremiah 32:27b]. It is human to be fearful when we lack the faith to completely trust God to see us through but to continually reject God's promises and get carried away with all sorts of imagination is wilful rebellion. Trust in the Lord and not in your own wisdom [Proverbs 3:5–6].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 22–23

THOUGHT

No enemy is so near that God is not nearer.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 14***LESSON****A light in the midst
of darkness****VERSE 2**

*And all the children of
Israel murmured against
Moses and against Aaron:
and the whole congregation
said unto them, Would
God that we had died in
the land of Egypt! Or would
God we had died in this
wilderness!*

The logic of the Israelites was shocking, to say the least. They were literally at the front door of the Promised Land. Because they listened to the exaggerated accounts of the spies, they were now mounting a coup against those who disagreed with them. Judgement on the 10 spies was swift. God struck them dead [v. 37] and He was on the verge of wiping out everyone.

In contrast, Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh were the only two spies who were brave enough to put their complete trust in God. They were ready to do God's will without questioning or murmuring. To them, God's promises were absolute and they were ready to obey without wavering.

God blesses those who put their complete faith in Him. In Daniel 3:12, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were willing to pay with their lives for disobeying Nebuchadnezzar. Both accounts in Numbers and Daniel record opposition in the face of tribulation. Do not be discouraged when you face your enemies in times of testing. The words of the three men in Daniel were resolute. They trusted that God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace [Daniel 3:17].

God's assurances are true and sure. Great blessings await those who put their unwavering trust in Him. He waits to bless His people when they trust in Him because without faith, it is impossible to please God [Hebrews 11:6].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 24

THOUGHT

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. – Romans 1:17

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 15–16*

LESSON

Disobedience has its consequences

NUMBERS 15:32

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.

God made a new start with the younger generation of Israelites. He promised that they would one day enter the Promised Land and claim their inheritance. Numbers 15 comes between the accounts of two rebellions [Numbers 14 and 16]. It mentions various laws concerning meat offerings and drink offerings [v. 1–12], both for the Israelites and for strangers [v. 13–16]; the sacrifice for the sin of ignorance [v. 22–29]; the punishment of presumptuous sins and an example in the account of the sabbath breaker [v. 30–36]; and a law concerning certain alterations to garments [v. 37–41].

The seriousness of the law is shown in the account of the presumptuous sinner who was caught gathering sticks on the sabbath. This man would have known the law but he broke the commandment anyway. While the gathering of sticks was not sinful in itself, it was done on a sabbath, which made all the difference. It showed wilful disobedience and outward defiance.

Sometimes we sin against God by what we do and sometimes by what we fail to do. Like the Israelites who repeatedly rebelled against the authority of God's Word and the authority of God's appointed leaders, there are believers today who commit the same folly. The consequences are divided churches, dysfunctional covenant homes and rebellious individuals who do not accomplish much for Christ.

We must be careful not to wilfully challenge God's authority. God has perfect knowledge of us. We cannot hide our thoughts and actions from Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 25

THOUGHT

Is your life a witness for Christ?

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 17–18***LESSON****Giving unto the Lord****NUMBERS 18:21**

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The confirmation of Aaron and the Levites as God's chosen representatives are revealed in Numbers 17–20. The signs of the rod budding with plants made it clear who God wanted to lead Israel. Aaron was to be the head of the priests and he represented the whole priesthood as well as the tribe of Levi.

The priests were to be wholly devoted to the service of God and for this, God would provide all their needs through tithes, first fruits and offerings. This provision would enable them to concentrate on the ministry and free them from worrying about their cares and worldly distractions.

The giving of tithes is an important part of Christian living. By giving, we not only acknowledge God's goodness towards us but also support those chosen by Him to lead us spiritually. God does not need our possessions. He owns everything in this world. However, what He requires of His children is that they respond in kind to show their gratitude.

It is sad that some believers choose to give the worst things to God—broken furniture, and old and worn-out items that the person does not want are sometimes donated to the church. To some, the church is a dumping ground while they keep the best for themselves. If we have this attitude towards giving, then we do not realise how much God has given to us. Let us give Him only our best. Do not approach God with a stingy, dishonouring attitude.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 26

THOUGHT

When we give God less than our best, we dishonour the God Who gave His best for us.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 19***LESSON****Purification for sin****VERSE 9**

And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

The Israelites had to be careful about what was clean and unclean, as this determines their relationship with the Lord and the other people in the camp. Detailed instructions were given in Leviticus 11–15 on what they could eat, how to handle bodily discharges, infections and corpses. This is certainly good hygiene but the main purpose was spiritual, that is, to teach the Jews the difference between holiness and sin, and also to encourage them to walk in holiness.

An innocent animal had to be sacrificed to purify the sins of the Israelites. Our Lord Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, had to shed His blood on the Cross of Calvary to expiate our sins. We do not have to perform external ritual cleansing now but simply confess our sins in repentance, and God will forgive and cleanse, as promised in 1 John 1:9.

Take heed of this chapter's lesson that God wants us to be a holy people. The apostle Peter likewise exhorts us to pattern our lives after our heavenly Father, Who has set the perfect example of holiness. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" [1 Peter 1:15]. This is God's calling for us—to live a sanctified life both inwardly and outwardly, totally consecrated unto Him.

Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God [2 Corinthians 7:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 27

PRAYER

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. – Psalm 139:23–24

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 20***LESSON****Leaders chastened****VERSE 12**

*And the LORD spake unto
Moses and Aaron, Because
ye believed me not, to
sanctify me in the eyes
of the children of Israel,
therefore ye shall not bring
this congregation into the
land which I have given
them.*

How sad it is to read this verse! Moses and Aaron, the great leaders of the Israelites, had led them out of Egypt, and had done so much for the people. Yet they were not allowed to lead them into the Promised Land.

Humanly speaking, it does not seem fair, as Moses had acted under extreme provocation. “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips” [Psalm 106:32–33]. Here we see that even the best of men have their failings. “The man Moses was very meek” [Numbers 12:3] and yet here he sinned in passion.

Why did Moses strike the rock instead of speaking to it as commanded by God? Why did he speak angrily to the people and call them rebels, and gave the impression that he and Aaron had supplied the water? This was indeed a sad and ironical demonstration of hostility by the meekest man on earth. Moses was human, after all. No doubt, he was weary and emotionally drained because of the death of his sister. Whatever the reasons, the fact still remains that he did not honour God or obey His command.

However, our God is a God of compassion and still provided the water in spite of Moses’ attitude and actions. “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” [Psalm 103:10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS I

THOUGHT

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. – 1 Corinthians 10:12

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 21***LESSON****Look and live****VERSE 8**

And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

The difficulties of the daily wanderings in the wilderness took their toll on the Israelites and they started to complain again. “And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread” [v. 5].

In the past God would usually appear to Moses, followed by judgement, but this time there was no warning but instant judgement of death from poisonous snakes.

Notice that God did not answer the prayer of the people to take away the serpents [v. 7]. Instead, He instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole for all to see. Those who believed His Word looked in faith to the brazen serpent and were healed. Our Saviour has told us so, that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” [John 3:14–15]. The brazen serpent is a symbol of salvation to those who look to Him and believe.

Just as the Israelites had to turn their eyes to the brazen serpent in believing obedience to be cured of the bite of the poisonous serpents, we must likewise look with faith at the Son of Man lifted up upon the Cross, if we would be delivered from the bite of the old serpent, from sin, death, the devil, and hell. – Keil Delitzsch.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 2–3

THOUGHT

Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. – Isaiah 45:22

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 22***LESSON****The way of Balaam****VERSE 12**

And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.

Balaam's name is mentioned three times in the New Testament [2 Peter 2:15, Jude 1:11, Revelation 2:14] and in all instances it is with reproach. What is the way of Balaam? It is a way of unrighteousness into which men are led by the wages of unrighteousness. It is to be covetous and ambitious and greedy of gain, under the guise of religion. It is a lifestyle of corrupt and immoral principles and practices that are displeasing to God.

In verse 12 God clearly forbade Balaam to go with the elders of Moab and Midian [v. 7]. Although Balaam knew God's declarative will, he deliberately disregarded it. The love of riches and honour turned Balaam away from his duty, although he knew that it would displease the Lord. He was definitely a hireling who was interested primarily in money [2 Peter 2:15].

Balaam's sin was that he ran greedily into an error for reward [Jude 1:11]. The love of money is indeed the root of all evil. Balaam was covetous and determined to do his own will, so he manoeuvred around God's will [v. 19]. He reached a very low level in life that God had to use a donkey to communicate His mind.

How marvellous the grace of our Lord is to allow Balaam to continue his journey to Moab. Balaam was obliged to bless the Israelites rather than curse them. God would use him to reveal great truths about Israel and her promised Messiah.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 3-4

THOUGHT

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
– Galatians 6:7

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 23***LESSON****The immutable God****VERSE 19**

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Note that these words of confession were from the mouth of Balaam himself. He acknowledged one of the attributes of God—that He is immutable. God makes no mistakes. Our God is a covenant-keeping God, true to every word He says. His promises are yea and amen [2 Corinthians 1:20]. God had promised to bless Israel [Genesis 12:3] and He would do just that despite Balaam’s evil intention to curse Israel. God is holy and trustworthy whereas man is fickle, swayed easily by power and money.

Our God is unchangeable. It is impossible for God to lie [Hebrews 6:18]. God is faithful to His Word and will fulfil what He has promised. No one can manipulate Him or thwart His unchanging purpose—His eternal decree for Israel, a blessed people. God intervened in Balaam’s wicked intentions and caused him to bless and not curse Israel. There is no reversal of His blessing [v. 20].

There was a time when a man’s word was his bond. Today, people make and break promises without thinking twice about it. “Promises are made to be broken”, so the saying goes. This is man’s philosophy. It did not originate from God.

Whenever you find a promise from God, it should strengthen your faith. It should give you the confidence to know that whatever God says will come to pass in your own personal life. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever” [Hebrews 13:8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 5

THOUGHT**I am the LORD, I change not. – Malachi 3:6a**

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 24–25***LESSON****Blessing instead of cursing****NUMBERS 24:9**

*He couched, he lay down
as a lion, and as a great
lion: who shall stir him up?
Blessed is he that blesseth
thee, and cursed is he that
curseth thee.*

It is a remarkable thing that a covetous Gentile soothsayer was used by King Balak to curse the people of Israel. After several experiences of meeting with God, Balaam was convinced that God was the One who was ultimately in control. God had personally spoken to him and he also saw the vision of the Almighty [Numbers 24:4].

However, Balaam failed miserably. Such an experience did not bring him to the place of submission and faith. Today, many unbelievers have the opportunity to hear the Gospel but still they reject the truth.

Balaam could not fulfil Balak's request to curse Israel because God is sovereign in all His ways. Moreover, Israel was chosen by God to be a distinct and unique nation. Even at Mount Peor, the Holy Spirit took full control of Balaam. There, he uttered another beautiful prophesy of Israel and her victorious king [Numbers 24:1–8]. He repeatedly mentioned the blessings that God had given to Abraham. Balak was angry with Balaam for not doing his work right. Balaam was sent away without any reward. The enemies of God will not profit from the business of sin.

As God's children, we are His possession. God has promised to bless us richly with all spiritual and material blessings in Christ Jesus. If you are not a child of God yet, come to Him in simple faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" [Acts 16:31]. This blessing of eternal life can be yours.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 6**

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the blessing of adoption to be joint heirs with Your Son.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 26–27***LESSON****The Good Shepherd****NUMBERS 27:17**

Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

By the Sea of Tiberias, our risen Saviour repeatedly told His disciple Peter to feed His sheep [John 21]. Indeed, God's people are precious in His sight, and He is not willing that even one should be lost [Matthew 18:14]. He is concerned that His sheep are led by good shepherds. God's criterion for a good shepherd is that he is a man who is spirit-filled [Numbers 27:18].

In today's reading, we see the children of Israel arriving at an important juncture in their journey to Canaan. They were poised to enter the Promised Land and God commanded Moses and Eleazar to take a census of the adults aged 20 years and above. The total was numbered about 601,000. But it is sad to note that, due to unbelief, other than Moses, Caleb and Joshua, not a single person of those involved in the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea lived to see this day.

Moses' task was nearly done and a new leader was needed to lead Israel into the next chapter of her history—the conquest of the land of Canaan, a chapter that is fraught with dangers.

Today, Christians also live in perilous times. Like the children of Israel, we too desperately need good shepherds to lead us. But sadly, they will be hard to find because our Lord has predicted that there would be many false prophets in the world. We must pray that God will send us good shepherds.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 7

THOUGHT

Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." Do you know Him?

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 28***LESSON****Pray without ceasing****VERSE 2**

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.

A new generation of Israelites stood before God and Moses was told to instruct them again concerning the law of sacrifices. Thanks to the work that our Saviour has accomplished on the Cross, Christians no longer need to observe these practices. However, lest the reader be tempted to dismiss the teachings in this chapter, he should note that there are many useful lessons and applications for us.

For example, the daily offerings both in the morning and evening should teach us to come before His presence with thanksgiving and a contrite heart. We should rely on God's all-sufficient grace and express our devotion to Him each day.

Like the Psalmist, we ought to seek the Lord in our morning prayer, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" [Psalm 5:3], and in our evening prayer, "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" [Psalm 63:6], "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" [Psalm 141:2].

The sacrifices of this chapter should remind us of the continued power of the sacrifice of Christ. The stress of modern living must not be an excuse to keep God out but rather they should remind us to come before Him continually, seeking His help and giving Him our worship.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 8

PRAISE

Thank God that Christians can come boldly before His throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 29*

LESSON

Days for worship and fellowship

VERSE I

And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.

Numbers 29 describes the offerings that the Israelites had to make unto the Lord in three holy convocations in the seventh month: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles.

For Israel to obey what God commanded in Numbers 28 and 29, it meant that the priests had to sacrifice 1,086 lambs, 113 bulls, 32 rams, more than a ton of flour and about 1,000 bottles of oil every year. Significantly, none of these hundreds of sacrifices could actually take away the people's sins. They needed a perfect sacrifice. We need that perfect sacrifice too. We notice that the most prominent animal of sacrifice was the lamb. This was an obvious prophetic reference to Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" [John 1:29]

God instituted many "holy convocations" in Israel's calendar—the Sabbath, the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement. A holy convocation is a sacred assembly of believers. These holy days provided a time for the Israelites to renew their commitment to God. They had to suspend their routine work, gather together to celebrate and worship and make animal sacrifices to God.

Similarly, when we feel tired or far from God, we need to take a "spiritual holiday" in which we can separate ourselves from our busy schedule and focus our heart and mind on the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 9

THOUGHT

God wants us to set aside days to rest our bodies, refresh our minds and remember His blessings.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 30***LESSON****Keeping of vow****VERSE 2**

If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

To God, keeping a vow is serious business and breaking one is sin. “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee” [Deuteronomy 23:21]. “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed” [Ecclesiastes 5:4].

As God takes vows seriously, it is better not to make them at all. “Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” [Ecclesiastes 5:5]. “Love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD” [Zechariah 8:17b]. “My brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” [James 5:12].

Of course, there is a vow that we can and should make—a vow to praise and thank God daily. “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him” [Psalm 22:25]. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High” [Psalm 50:14]. “Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee” [Psalm 56:12]. “So will I sing praise unto thy name forever, that I may daily perform my vows” [Psalm 61:8].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 10-11**

THOUGHT

This is one vow all of us can make: “Dear Lord, I want to serve You all the days of my life.” This is one vow that we will spend our lifetime fulfilling.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 31***LESSON****No means no!****VERSE 15**

*And Moses said unto them,
Have ye saved all the
women alive?*

This chapter begins with God's commission for a holy war against the Midianites. Led by Phinehas the priest, 1,000 men from each of the 12 tribes of Israel prepared for war [v. 1–6]. As predicted, Balaam and the other kings of Midian were slain. This was their judgement for going against God's chosen people [v. 7–12]. Moses was angry at the news of women captives kept alive. The instruction was to spare only young virgins to be used as slaves [v. 13–18]. The ritual of cleansing for purification of the Israelites was described in detail here [v. 19–24]. This was followed by the dividing of the spoils of war accordingly and offerings made to God for protecting them [v. 25–54].

Perhaps you may be surprised at the seemingly harsh command given by God to Moses to slay all the males [v. 7]. Note Moses' anger in verse 15. You may also wonder why the women captives must also be slain. Knowing the history of Israel as a theocratic nation (a country under God's rule) would help us understand why. It was to protect Israel from the idolatry and immorality of her enemies [Deuteronomy 7:16].

Balaam was instrumental in leading Israel to sin against the Lord at Baal Peor [Numbers 25:7–15]. Eleazar's son, Phinehas, showed great courage against those who committed whoredom. Israel was spared from the plague then.

Our God is a jealous God. He will not allow His children to commit spiritual adultery [James 4:4]. Be faithful to God always.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 12–13

CHALLENGE

Stay true and loyal to God by saying no to Satan.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 32***LESSON****Mutual benefit****VERSE 23**

*But if ye will not do so,
behold, ye have sinned
against the LORD: and be
sure your sin will find you
out.*

Verses 1–5 describe the requests made by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. They were all set to settle on the Transjordan rather than enter the Promised Land. Initially, Moses was displeased with them. Their attitude revealed their unbelief, selfishness and cowardice [v. 6–15]. After the Reubenites and Gadites agreed to join their brethren in the war, Moses acceded to their requests. However, they were warned of the consequences of breaking their word [v. 16–27]. As promised by Moses, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh would possess the land east of Jordan [v. 28–42].

Moses was wise enough to point out that any wrongdoing is against God only [v. 23]. He reminded the tribes of Reuben and Gad about the sins of their fathers in times past. Those Israelites who were fearful of occupying Canaan ended up wandering in the wilderness for almost 40 years. Only Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

What the Reubenites and Gadites asked for was motivated by the lust of the eyes and the pride of life [1 John 2:15–17]. Though they received their inheritance [Joshua 22:1–6], it was not a wise choice. It proved to be a source of trouble. The absence of a natural frontier made them an easy target for constant attack.

Let us be considerate of others. Do not be guilty of self-interest and any ulterior motive in offering help. Owe no man anything but love.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 14

QUESTION**Are you a Joshua?**

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 33–34***LESSON****Enter to possess****NUMBERS 33:53**

And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.

What is described in detail from verses 1–49 of Chapter 33 can be found in the Book of Exodus. It is a flashback of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. God's instructions to the Israelites through Moses were very precise. All the Canaanites were to be destroyed [Numbers 33:50–56]. Numbers 34 is a recount of the boundaries of the Promised Land. Joshua and Eleazer were in charge of dividing up the land.

God's goodness and long-suffering never fail where His chosen people were concerned. Despite their disobedience, God never forsook the Israelites. The problems faced by them were not too difficult for God to handle. It attested to His sovereignty over the affairs of men.

Don't be alarmed by God's command in Numbers 33:53 for total extermination of the Canaanites. This was His judgement on their wickedness [Leviticus 18:24–28]. Furthermore, the different tribes of Israel would be able to claim their inheritance as God promised. Knowing the weakness His people had with idols, this temptation was removed.

What happened to the Israelites can happen to us. Their enemies became pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides. Recurring sin is dangerous. Is there an area of weakness in your life that you are tempted to indulge in again? Pray for strength to overcome your thorn in the flesh. As God's children, we must forsake our former lifestyle. Let us live holy lives pleasing to our Lord during our spiritual pilgrimage on earth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 15

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for our spiritual inheritance in You.

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 35*

LESSON

Protection of the innocent

VERSE 13

And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge.

The Jews occupied Canaan and set up 48 cities for the Levites. Out of these, six were specially established as cities of refuge to protect the innocent. Pastures were also given for their flocks and herds [v. 1–8]. Laws concerning murder and accidental death were mentioned in great detail from verses 9 to 34. Those guilty of manslaughter could find haven in any of the six cities of refuge.

Look up a Bible map of ancient Israel for the location of these six cities. You will find that each one of them is near enough for any Israelite in trouble to flee to for refuge. Golen, Ramoth and Bezer are on the east side of the Jordan. Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron are on the west side.

According to the Jewish law, those guilty of murder would be stoned to death. However, anyone who accidentally killed a person could flee to one of the six cities of refuge to present his case. If found innocent, that person would be under the protection of the elders until the death of the high priest. He was allowed to return home after that.

Any manslayer in those days must stay put in the city of refuge after being acquitted from the charge of manslaughter till the death of the priest. This is a timely reminder of God's saving grace through the sacrificial death of His Son. Only those who acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Saviour would be freed from eternal death.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 16

QUESTION

Is the Lord Jesus Christ your refuge?

BIBLE LESSON*Numbers 36***LESSON****Looking after your
own****VERSE 12**

*And they were married into
the families of the sons of
Manasseh the son of Joseph,
and their inheritance
remained in the tribe of the
family of their father.*

The Book of Numbers ends beautifully with loving concern shown to Jewish females concerning the rights of their inheritance. The elders of the tribe of Manasseh ensured that the daughters of Zelophehad marry within their own tribes so as to maintain their inheritance. Such an amendment to the law of female inheritance would remove civil strife among the tribes. The last verse of this chapter is a reference to all the changes mentioned in Numbers 27 to 36.

It is heartening indeed to read of the rights of women being considered here. It was said that one of the three things for which a Pharisee was thankful was that he was not born a woman. That reveals the Pharisee's condescending attitude towards women. Thank God that in Christ, "there is neither male nor female" [Galatians 3:28]. Moreover, a newborn babe in Christ shares the same spiritual blessings as a mature Christian.

Unlike the women of Zelophehad, whose possessions would be added to the men of another tribe after marriage, those who belong to Christ receive the same blessings regardless of one's gender. Once you are in Christ, you are "married" to Him forever. As heirs of God, we are joint-heirs with Christ.

The elders of Israel took care of the needs of the people. Thank God that all believers have the Lord Jesus to provide for all our needs. Brethren of the same faith also look after one another's welfare [Galatians 6:2, 6]

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 17

REMINDER**Love (charity) begins at home.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 1*

LESSON

**The paternal
upholding of God**

VERSE 31

*And in the wilderness,
where thou hast seen how
that the LORD thy God bare
thee, as a man doth bear
his son, in all the way that
ye went, until ye came into
this place.*

These words are part of a discourse delivered by Moses to the Israelites on the plain overlooking the Red Sea. Moses reminded them of what they had seen in the wilderness [v. 31–33].

Moses was speaking to the second generation of Israelites who were preparing to enter the Promised Land. God had guided their fathers thus far. The first generation of Israelites had been eyewitnesses of God's presence, guidance and power. They had been carried in the arms of divine grace with as much care and tenderness as any loving father would show to his own child. Now, Moses was rehearsing in their ears the goodness and mercy of God.

Each of us has a history, a story of our life. It has been written not by pen but inscribed on the eternal mind of God. Our Creator is in our history. We cannot remove God from our history. We are in His eternal purpose and will. In God's plan every step we take has been laid for us so that God is in our history in a way far more than we ourselves are in it.

Our history shows that God's divine upholding is paternal. "The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son" [v. 31b], and He does so in wisdom, love, patience, grace and mercy. If God bears us, we should "be quiet from fear of evil" [Proverbs 1:33b] and lovingly trust and obey Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 18

PRAYER

**Thank You, Lord, for being a tender Father,
supplying our wants and feeding us Your Word
unto this day.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 2***LESSON****God's faithfulness****VERSE 25**

This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.

The Israelites started their wanderings by journeying into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea and circled Mount Seir for many days. God was faithful to guide His people throughout the wilderness [v. 1–3].

The people wandered for some 40 years until the first generation had died out. God, through Moses, instructed the second generation to march northward to the Promised Land. He warned His people to prevent harm from coming to them [v. 4–6]. He was also faithful to bless and meet the needs of His chosen people [v. 7–8]. God was faithful to execute judgement and chastisement, even upon His own people who committed terrible sin [v. 13–15].

God kept His promises even to the descendants of Esau and Lot. God did not allow the Israelites to encroach on their territory. God gave them victory over the Amorite king Sihon and over Og, king of Bashan. God taught them that they could not act presumptuously but He would empower and enable them to be victorious when they fought in His strength and under His direction.

Moses told how they defeated and destroyed those who opposed their travel through their land and how they accumulated livestock and spoil from their captured cities. God led them and Moses said that it was God Who delivered their enemies over to them [v. 25]. God is omnipotent. He has supreme power. God has the power to fulfil all His promises to His people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 19–20

THOUGHT

God is faithful, always faithful to His Word, always faithful to do exactly what He promises.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 3***LESSON****A word of encouragement****VERSE 28**

But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

Moses prayed that if it were God's will, he might go before Israel over Jordan into Canaan. God's answer to this prayer was a mixture of mercy and judgement. God was angry with Moses and forbade him to speak about the matter because of his impetuous sin of striking the rock [Numbers 20:1–12]. However, God promised His servant Moses a sight of Canaan from the top of Mount Pisgah. We are free to bring almost any request to God but we cannot expect God to acquiesce when we ask for something that is against His known will.

The Lord gave a clear charge to Moses. He was to commission Joshua as the new leader of Israel. God directed Moses to encourage and strengthen Joshua for his future task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Moses reminded Joshua of God's deeds and told him not to be discouraged because God would fight for him [v. 23–27].

Joshua was a man of great faith and experience. He was qualified to lead God's people. Throughout the wilderness journey he stood by Moses. As a leader of the army, he had been on Mount Sinai with Moses. At Kadesh-Barnea he proved his faith and obedience by standing with Moses and Caleb against the 10 spies and the whole unbelieving nation of Israel.

All of us need a word of encouragement or recognition now and then. Let us look for ways to encourage those who are facing new challenges.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 21–22

THOUGHT

The purest form of encouragement is always found in the truth of God's Word and through the honest speech of God's people.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 4***LESSON****Pass it on****VERSE 9**

*Only take heed to thyself,
and keep thy soul diligently,
lest thou forget the things
which thine eyes have seen,
and lest they depart from
thy heart all the days of
thy life: but teach them thy
sons, and thy sons' sons;*

Just before God's people entered the Promised Land, Moses reminded the second generation of Israelites to obey God's laws. He warned them not to add to or subtract from God's commandments but simply obey them [v. 2]. He told them not to forget their experiences with the Lord or the Ten Commandments, which they must never let slip from their minds and hearts. They are to guard against all false gods and false worship [v. 15–31] and acknowledge that the Lord alone is God [v. 32–40].

The Israelites had been eyewitnesses to the miraculous salvation of God from Egypt and throughout the wilderness wanderings. They had never seen God with their eyes but they had seen the works of God through His presence, guidance, protection and provision.

They were to teach His laws to the generations to come so that their descendants would know and fear God. Just as their parents did, the children would live holy and distinctive lives before the surrounding nations. They would be dynamic witnesses to the holy character and demands of the true God. They would be living testimonies to the truth of God's holy Word and commandments. Therefore, God's Word must be obeyed and taught to the children of all succeeding generations.

As followers of Christ, we have a great responsibility to educate and share with our progeny about God's creation, His goodness and His salvation. Let us pass it on.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 23

THOUGHT

If children are to find their way to God, we must train them early in the ways of the Lord.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5–6***LESSON****The Ten
Commandments****DEUTERONOMY 5:1**

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgements which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

Moses was a good teacher. First, he reminded the Israelites of God's mercy and goodness [Deuteronomy 1–4]. Now, he reviewed the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai (Horeb). He urged them to obey the teachings. He reminded them that they have entered into a covenant with God. Therefore they should be sensitive to what God required of them.

The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God. We are to acknowledge that there is but one Lord. We are to give Him our wholehearted allegiance. The fifth commandment deals with our duty to honour our parents. The sixth to ninth commandments deal with our duty to others. We must not harm others, rob their possessions or destroy their names. The tenth commandment deals with our duty to control ourselves. We should be contented with what we have.

This commandment and the first commandment deal with inward attitudes rather than outward actions. Breaking either of these two commandments could lead to breaking all the rest of the commandments. People rob, commit adultery, lie and even murder because of covetousness. If we obey the first commandment and truly love God with all our hearts, then covetousness would not be a problem.

The Ten Commandments can be summarised into two great commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour [Matthew 22:37–40; Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Leviticus 19:18]. It is important for us to know the Law of God so that we might know God better and please Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 24**

QUESTION**Will you?**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 7–8***LESSON****Separation****DEUTERONOMY 7:6**

*For thou art an holy people
unto the LORD thy God:
the LORD thy God hath
chosen thee to be a special
people unto himself, above
all people that are upon the
face of the earth.*

God's chosen people must maintain a separated position by obeying God's commands. Obedience results in blessings but compromise results in chastisement. Israel was to keep herself pure and separate from other nations.

In the Bible, separation is not isolation. If believers are isolated, how can they witness for the Lord and be the salt and light of the world [Matthew 5:13–16]? Believers can still be involved in the normal activities of daily living. Our Lord Jesus had contact with the people of the world but was not contaminated from that contact. True biblical separation is contact without contamination. Being different from others will create opportunities to share the Gospel with them.

God commanded Israel to “utterly destroy” the Canaanites [Deuteronomy 7:2]. He would not allow any intermarriage or political treaties with the Canaanites. How can a loving God kill anyone, even children? Although God is love, He is also just. The iniquity of the Canaanites had not reached the point of divine judgement in the days of Abraham [Genesis 15:16] but now was so great that God commanded Israel not to show any mercy. This was both a judgement and a protection for Israel from the idolatry and immorality of her enemies. [Deuteronomy 7:16b].

We do not have the authority to kill those who worship false gods. Our task is to show our love for them and seek to win them to faith in Christ. At the same time, we must maintain a separated position and not be contaminated by the things of the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 25

THOUGHT

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. – Deuteronomy 7:6a

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 9***LESSON****Trust in the Lord****VERSE 6**

*Understand therefore,
that the LORD thy God
giveth thee not this good
land to possess it for thy
righteousness; for thou art a
stiffnecked people.*

Moses reminded the Israelites that they would meet great and powerful nations when they entered the land of Canaan. He assured them that God would go before them to help them defeat their enemies [v. 1–3]. He would work in them and through them to conquer their foes.

Moses reminded them that the land of Canaan was a gift from the Lord and not a reward for their righteousness. God had promised to give the land to Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:7–21], and He would keep His promise [v. 4–5].

Moses reminded them of their stubbornness and disobedience [v. 6]. He started with their worship of the golden calf at Mount Sinai [v. 7–21], and then briefly mentioned the places where they had rebelled against God [v. 22]. After that, he declared their unbelief and rebellion when they refused to enter the Promised Land 40 years ago [v. 23]. They did not believe that God would be able to help them—in spite of all the wonderful things that God had already done for them. They refused to obey because they depended on their own abilities and strength instead of trusting in God's promise.

Unbelief is the root of many sins and problems. When you feel lost, it may be because you are looking at your own ability to solve your problem instead of trusting God for His guidance. Beware the sin of pride.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 26

REMINDER

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. – Proverbs 3:5–6

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 10

LESSON
A call to dedication

VERSE 12

*And now, Israel, what doth
 the LORD thy God require
 of thee, but to fear the LORD
 thy God, to walk in all his
 ways, and to love him, and
 to serve the LORD thy God
 with all thy heart and with
 all thy soul,*

The first section of this chapter records the second giving of the law, and the placing of the two tablets in the Ark [v. 1–5]. Moses reminded the people that he had interceded for them to God. God had heard his prayer and withheld His judgement. He told them to go in and possess the land [v. 10–11].

Then Moses challenged the people to dedicate themselves to the Lord. The Israelites must fear the Lord, walk in all His ways, love Him, serve Him and keep His commandments [v. 12–13].

Love is the essential element in their relationship with God. Moses used the word “love” six times in this section [v. 12, 15, 19; Deuteronomy 11:1, 13, 22]. Moses made it clear that they were to love the Lord wholeheartedly. He wanted them to remember that loving obedience to the Lord was the key to every blessing. Who is this God Whom the Israelites are to love sincerely and without reservation? He is the Lord of the universe. He is above all those that are called gods [v. 17]. He is the righteous judge Who rules supreme over the universe.

What has this God done for them? He has loved them. He has chosen them [v. 15]. He has manifested Himself in helping orphans, widows and strangers. He has multiplied the Israelites as the stars of heaven [v. 22]. Do you love the Lord wholeheartedly? How do you show it?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 27

CHALLENGE

We should also love the Lord and serve Him.

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 11

LESSON
Love God

VERSE 1

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgements, and his commandments, always.

God explains why we ought to love Him. He has the right to command our love but He chooses to be patient in His dealings. We are reminded how the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt. We, too, face great difficulties as we sojourn on earth. God showed His might in the destruction of the powerful Egyptian army and His grace in parting the Red Sea.

We should count our blessings as God taught the Israelites. He asked them to remember how they were delivered from the hardship of slavery. The Lord was with them in their journey out of Egypt. God provided food, shelter and protection. He would continue to do so with the promise of good land, weather and harvest.

While there is comfort in looking up to an Almighty and gracious God, there is also a warning in this chapter. We will have to face the consequences if we stray away from Him, when we disregard God or when we are ungrateful. We would end up in misery without God's blessings. We have a choice—to love God and be blessed or to worship idols and be cursed. This is a violent, selfish world where the law is the survival of the fittest. The winner takes all.

Stay close to God so that you are protected and guided at all times. Pray that you love [v. 1], obey [v. 8], serve [v. 13], teach the next generation [v. 19] and be faithful to God as you ought to be.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 28–29

THOUGHT

**It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD,
 and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.**
 – Psalm 92:1

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 12***LESSON****Love not this world****VERSE 28**

Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

We may be living peacefully with others on this earth although they are not Christians. However, we are warned not to adopt their carnal behaviour. When God delivered the land of Canaan to the Israelites, they were asked to destroy the places of worship and any trace that pointed to the worship of anything or anyone other than God. This was done to prevent the people from straying to follow the heathen godless worship of idols. The message is clear even to us today. Stay away from evil.

In His mercy and grace, God allows us to have freedom in life. Today, we have the freedom to do what we like. But freedom comes with responsibility. We are to live within the boundaries set by God. Remember that we are to first love God and that in all that we do, we have to evaluate if it is God-honouring.

The value of God is different from that of the world that we are in. The world uses human standards as a reference. They do what is right in their own eyes, not knowing that we are all sinners and even at best our human standards are corrupt. When in doubt, always measure against God's standard—the Bible. We must do what is right in God's eyes.

Think before you act or say something and see if they bring Glory to God.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 30-31**

THOUGHT

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 13

LESSON
**Do what is right in
the eyes of the Lord**

VERSE 4

*Ye shall walk after the
LORD your God, and
fear him, and keep his
commandments, and obey
his voice, and ye shall serve
him, and cleave unto him.*

Moses was the greatest of all prophets [Deuteronomy 34:10] so he was authorised (by God) to speak about the subject on prophets. A prophet is supposed to declare God's Word faithfully. They are mouthpieces of God. Three people were cited by Moses as a potential danger who would bring shame to the name of God. First, it was a prophet [v. 1–5], second, it was a family member [v. 6–11], then it was a wicked man living among the Israelites as one of them [v. 12–18]. All of them were up to no good and that they might entice Israel to worship other gods.

These people deceived with their sweet words. Their intent was to bring glory to themselves and disregard anything else. Unless we are discerning and cling on to God's Word, we can fall prey to such people. We drop our guard because we assume that a prophet is supposed to speak God's Word, a family member should be trusted and a fellow believer should not start and fuel a rumour.

Today, many people claim to be prophets or God's servants. They are only working for their stomachs. We witness family infighting where one cheats other members of the same family. (A church is like a family too.) We also have many wicked people living among us. Their motive is personal gain, even if it is at the cost of the others. We are to be watchful.

Pray that we will love God and stay obedient to His Word.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 32

THOUGHT

**Beware of false prophets, which come to you in
sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening
wolves. – Matthew 7:15**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 14–15***LESSON****Observing the
Sabbath day to keep
it holy****DEUTERONOMY 14:22**

*Thou shalt truly tithe all
the increase of thy seed,
that the field bringeth forth
year by year.*

Moses instructs us through God's Word to observe the worship of God and Him alone. We are to stay away from all forms of apostasy. These included pagan rites of mourning the dead and eating food declared to be ritually unclean in Leviticus.

Then Moses spoke of the law of tithing [Leviticus 27:30–33; Numbers 18:21–32]. We are to tithe ten per cent of our earnings. Consider this: unless God blesses us with good health, we are unable to earn anything to provide for ourselves. When you think of this, tithing will come from a willing and grateful heart. Moses also stipulated that those who could do so should give freely and ungrudgingly. It does not matter if you earn much or little. Giving should be from the heart and with love. God is rich and does not require any money from us but He extends the privilege for us to show our love and gratitude to Him.

We are to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. Observing the Sabbath is not just a routine day off. It should be a day that we set aside to worship and ponder on God's Word. We are to reflect on God's blessing for the days past and seek His strength and wisdom for the coming days. On the Sabbath day we are also to focus on God in public worship.

How do you spend your Sabbath and what is your tithing like?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 33

THOUGHT**Meditate on Malachi 3:10.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 16–17***LESSON****Godly leadership****DEUTERONOMY 17:14**

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

The Israelites would soon arrive in the land that God had promised them. They had to conquer, make settlement and in time become a nation. Many earthly nations have kings. God knew they would eventually ask for a king. In anticipation of that, God gave Moses the blueprint on how the future king should be chosen and what he must and must not do.

The main criterion in looking for a king is that he must be a fellow Israelite. He must be one who knows and walks with God. How could anybody lead the people of God if he is not one who knows and walks with God?

Once appointed, he must then adhere to five things. First, he must not seek to multiply horses. Horses are status symbol. Second, he must not cause his people to return to Egypt. Egypt typifies slavery and the world. Third, he must not take many wives. Many wives bring strife, division and compromise. Fourth, he must not accumulate wealth. The temptation of riches is that it tends to lead one to become self-dependent rather than God-dependent. Lastly, he must personally duplicate a copy of God's laws and spend time reading, meditating and keeping them. This is so that he would learn to fear God and obey His commandments.

While there is no king in the Christian church, God has decreed that there should be leaders. And all of us have areas of authority in our lives, and would greatly benefit by heeding these principles.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 34**

THOUGHT

Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 18

LESSON
The Lord is my inheritance

VERSE 2

Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

When the Promised Land was portioned out, the Levites did not get their own land. Instead, they were to be priests among the other tribes. The instructions given by Moses here emphasised that the Levites were not to be attached to the land as their inheritance, but to the Lord Himself. He would be their inheritance.

Inheritance, according to Ezekiel, is possession. “And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession” [Ezekiel 44:28]. A similar trend of thought is echoed in Song of Solomon 6:3, where the bride says to the bridegroom: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” The bride is a figure of the Church and the bridegroom, a figure of the Lord. So, as a church, we are the Lord’s and the Lord is ours.

We are bought with a great price, and it is not “silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” [1 Peter 1:18–19].

We are told by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. So, like the Levites, our inheritance, as priests in Christ, is God Himself. Like them, we are to trust in God’s perfect plan to provide for us. He is the reason for our existence. When we understand that, we enter into our true priestly calling.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 35

HYMN

**Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me—
 Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.**

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 19

LESSON
Cities of refuge

VERSE 10

That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.

In the culture of Moses' time, when someone is killed, the society gives the right of vengeance to the nearest kinsman of the person who is murdered. Sometimes, however, the person's death is the result of an accident. If the avenger of blood does not take the time to find out all the details, it would result in the unjust death of a man, which, the Lord says, will bring guilt upon the whole nation.

The purpose in providing cities of refuge is so that, in the event of an accidental killing, the killer could flee to safety in one of the cities until his case had been properly considered. This way, an attempt could be made to see that justice is done.

While the Israelites understood murder to be the actual taking of another person's life, our Lord in Matthew 5:22, however, says that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is guilty of murder. In the light of that, all of us are guilty since we have all been angry with someone without any cause before. While we may flee to the earthly city of refuge, the protection will only be temporary.

There is, however, one city of refuge we can run to: the Lord Jesus. In that city, justice will be carried out but we will, though guilty, be declared innocent because someone else has taken the guilt upon Himself and paid with His life. Here lies the wonderful truth of the wisdom, love, mercy and justice of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 36

HYMN

Safe in the arms of Jesus

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 20

LESSON
Fear not

VERSE 4

*For the LORD your God is
 he that goeth with you, to
 fight for you against your
 enemies, to save you.*

The Israelites were about to enter the land of Canaan, where they would see many battles. The Canaanites had larger armies with better military equipment. It was natural for the Israelites to be fearful. So before each battle, the high priest would meet and remind them not to be afraid, because God is on their side.

After the priests had done that, the officers would come in and target those who had concerns like houses, vineyards and women. These people would be told to go home. If they were on their way to battle, they would lose their focus and become an easy target for the enemy.

Unlike the Israelites, however, we have no physical warfare to fight. We have not been called to be a nation but to be members of the church of Christ. As members, we are soldiers nonetheless. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:11 to put on the whole armour of God. The picture he uses is that of a soldier. He emphasises, however, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Like the Levitical priest, we need to constantly remind ourselves that God is on our side. We also need to, as soldiers in the army of Christ, rid ourselves of all worldly concerns that would cause us to be easy target of the enemy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 1-2

THOUGHT

If God is for us, who is against us?

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 21*

LESSON

**Cursed is everyone
that hangeth on a
tree**

VERSE 23

*His body shall not remain
all night upon the tree, but
thou shalt in any wise bury
him that day; (for he that
is hanged is accursed of
God;) that thy land be not
defiled, which the LORD
thy God giveth thee for an
inheritance.*

A strange rule about capital punishment is given in verse 23. Since the Jews stoned people to death, why would there be a rule about not leaving a body hanging on a tree all night if you happened to put him to death by hanging on a tree?

As it turns out, this law was put in place because one day, Jesus would be crucified (hung on a tree). According to this law in [v. 23], the land where the Jews occupied would be defiled if the bodies of criminals executed were allowed to be hanged overnight. So we are told in John 19:31–32 that the Jews approached Pilate to have the bodies of the three crucified that day to be taken down.

While verse 23 points prophetically to the day of the Crucifixion, what is more significant in that verse is the word “curse”. To be cursed of God is something fatal. The truth is that we are all cursed, because we have all broken God’s Law [Galatians 3:10]. Since nobody could ever obey the law perfectly, no one can rid himself of the curse by his own efforts.

What can we do then to be rid of the curse? The answer lies in Galatians 3:13. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” All we need to do to be rid of the curse is to put our faith in Christ Jesus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 3-4

THOUGHT

The just shall live by faith.

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 22

LESSON
**Consequences of
 sexual sins**

VERSE 21

Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

This chapter records for us the consequences of sexual sins, giving several scenarios. In each scenario, we find the end result consistent—to purge Israel of sin.

If a husband falsely claims his bride to be not a virgin, and when proved untrue, he would have to pay his father-in-law 100 shekels of silver. If proved true, his bride would be stoned to death in front of her father's house. If a man has sex with another married woman in a place where the woman can cry for help, both shall be stoned. If he rapes her at a deserted place, then only he shall be punished. Such were the laws God set for Israel—to purge her of all sin.

We see God's high standard and solemn stand on marriage and sex. Sadly, the society we live in has departed from God's laws. The result is the prevalence of sexual promiscuity. Today, many people do not believe in pre-marital purity. After marriage, they do not practise post-marital fidelity. The divorce rate is ever increasing, and divorces take place over the slightest disagreement. The moral standards of society are a far cry from God's standards.

Let us remind ourselves of God's Word and His commandments. He has given us many commandments not to restrict us but to free us and purge us of sin. Let us not stoop to the standards of the world, when we so clearly have standards that our Father has given us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 5

PRAYER

Dear Lord, purge me from all my sins.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 23–24*

LESSON

Compassion for the poor and needy**DEUTERONOMY 24:17**

Thou shalt not pervert the judgement of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.

Deuteronomy 23 states the laws for exclusion from assembly, uncleanness in the camp and miscellaneous laws. In Chapter 24, we see God's laws in the treatment of divorced women and how we should treat our debtors, namely the poor and widowed ones.

When we lend to a fellow Christian, we are to take no interest whatsoever [Deuteronomy 23:19]. We have a right to reclaim our principal sum as agreed but not the interest. We can claim interest only when we lend to non-Christians, although that is not a necessity. However, we must also be mindful of the poor and needy, to show care and concern for them [Deuteronomy 23:15–16, 24:6].

In fact, we should show compassion and mercy to the poor and needy, even if they are indebted to us [Deuteronomy 24:13–14]. This is because the Jews were once slaves in Egypt but were redeemed by God. Just as God had shown mercy to them when they were oppressed, they were likewise commanded to show mercy to the poor and needy.

Christians, too, must show mercy and compassion to the poor and needy as well, just as our Saviour has redeemed us from sin and given us everlasting life through grace. Let us remember and cherish our gift. More importantly, let us reciprocate by extending our mercy to the less fortunate. It would be most joyous if we could bless someone with our mercy. In return, God will also bless us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 6

PRAYER

Dear Lord, please give me the gift of compassion for the poor and needy.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 25–26***LESSON****Give more than just leftovers****DEUTERONOMY 26:12**

When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;

The first part of Deuteronomy 25 concerns the continuation of lineage of a man, while the second half is about honesty. Chapter 26 talks about firstfruits and tithes. It ends off with a stern instruction for the people to follow God's commands.

The word "firstfruits" means the first fruits that a tree bears in harvest. Usually, after planting a fruit-bearing tree from seeds, the first of its fruits are the best. God instituted this offering to Himself as He gave the Israelites land at that time. Since the majority of them were farmers, they would be able to offer their fruits.

The act of offering the firstfruits is an act of gratitude and respect, showing that one does not offer the later offerings or the bad fruits to God. In the later part of the chapter, God talks about the Levitical tithe [Deuteronomy 26:12] and the followers' state of heart if they follow it [Deuteronomy 26:13].

How does this apply to us today? We are to give our "firstfruits" to God, not our leftovers. How would you feel if God were to bless you with His leftover blessings? When we get our salary, we should purposefully set aside a sum of money for God first before allocating our budget to expenditure and savings. Next, besides the required tenth, we are to give as much as we can afford freely. Lastly, give cheerfully and not grudgingly, as God knows your heart [2 Corinthians 9:7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 7

THOUGHT

God loves a cheerful giver, so why not be one?

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 27

LESSON
God's curses of disobedience

VERSE 26

Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Before crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to remind the Israelites of their commitment to God. He instructed Moses that 12 curses be written on an altar of stone coated with plaster, so that the curses could be clearly seen. The purpose of engraving these curses was for God's people to accept their responsibilities that come with the blessings and privileges of the covenant.

Moses was to instruct the people thus, before they crossed the river. After each curse, they would resound with a loud "amen", which is "so let it be". Every amen to be resounded by the people after the reading of the curse was not just their agreement with the words spoken, it was their acceptance of the terms of the covenant.

Every curse that God commanded to be written on the stones is related to the Ten Commandments given earlier. A third of them related to sexual sins as the neighbours around them practised these sins, besides other sins. The twelfth curse [v. 26] obligated the Jews to obey every law that God had given them.

Christians today also have such guidelines to live by. The Bible teaches us to shun sin. We have no reason to feign ignorance to proclaim that only the Jews are commanded not to sin. Likewise, we cannot feign ignorance that we will not be cursed when we sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 8

THOUGHT

Are you afraid of God's wrath on your sins?

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 28***LESSON****God's blessings of obedience****VERSE 2**

And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

Deuteronomy 28 contains 68 verses and is divided into two main themes: 14 verses on blessings (for obedience) and 54 verses on curses (for disobedience). The curses for disobedience are basically the exact opposite of the blessings for obedience. However, God chose to elaborate far more on curses rather than on blessings due to the frail faith of the Jews.

Since yesterday's writing was on curses, it is comforting and logical to have today's lesson on blessings. God has promised to bless His people in all places—the city, the field and at home. We do not read that the people were to say “amen” to these blessings as compared to the curses. The curses were not prophetic while this list of blessings is God's prophetic promise to His people for their commitment to Him. Therefore, these blessings did not require the people's agreement.

Just as God had promised that He would supply rain to the Jews for their crops, He will provide blessings for our needs. He will also bless us if we keep His commandments but punish us if we trespass them. Do note, however, that there are exceptions (such as in Job's case).

This system of blessings and curses to the Jews at that time was given because Israel was still in its infancy and needed material encouragement and chastisement. For the more mature Christians, our expectation is different. We are expected to be perfect in Christ and not stumbling blocks to infant Christians, lest they fall.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 9**

PRAYER

Dear Lord, bless me with Your Word today.

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 29

LESSON
**Establishing God's
people**

VERSE 13

That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The Lord commanded Moses to make a new covenant with the Israelites at the end of their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, before they finally entered the Promised Land. Moses reminded them how, at the beginning of their journey, they had witnessed God's mighty acts upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Moses, through God's leading, had brought them through the wilderness on nothing but the providence and protection of God.

On this historic day, God established the Israelites as His people, as He had promised unto their forefathers. They were reminded to keep the covenant and to do them so that they would prosper in all that they did. They were further warned not to sin against God. There had been many temptations, especially idol worshipping, among the other nations, which the Israelites had encountered.

God knew very well the conditions of their hearts. They were prone to turn away from Him and be seduced to serve other gods. They were likened to roots that "beareth gall and wormwood", that is, bitterness and poison. God's wrath upon them will be great. He will root them out of their land as an example to all.

We are also on a journey through the wilderness of this world. We thank God for His daily providence and protection, for we can fully trust in Him [Psalm 37:3-5]. Let us, therefore, as thankful people, live our lives soberly, righteously and godly in this present time [Titus 2:12].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 10-11

THOUGHT

Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 30

LESSON
A simple choice

VERSE 19

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Amidst the blessings and curses that God pronounced in the covenant with His people, He revealed His compassion to the Israelites when He promised to gather them back to the Promised Land after they had been scattered to foreign nations for a season because of their rebellion. He would cause them to remember this covenant when they were in their captivity so that they would return and be obedient to Him again. Not only would He bring them back, He would also increase the works of their hands, increase the fruits of their cattle and multiply their numbers above their fathers.

God made it clear that His commandments to His people are simple and easily understood [v. 10–14]. The Israelites therefore had no excuse when presented clearly the choice between life and good, or death and evil. The former would invoke the blessings of God while the latter, curses.

Today, let us consider what God has also laid before us in the Scriptures. The good news of Jesus Christ is presented to us simply and clearly—how He died on the Cross to save us from our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day [1 Corinthians 15:3–4]. He is now sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for His saints [Romans 8:34].

The choice is laid before us: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, or reject Him and spend eternity in hell. What is your response to this simple choice?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 12–13

MEDITATION

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. – 2 Peter 3:9

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 31

LESSON
**Facing the future
with confidence**

VERSE 8

*And the LORD, he it is that
doth go before thee; he will
be with thee, he will not
fail thee, neither forsake
thee: fear not, neither be
dismayed.*

After God had made a covenant with the Israelites, Moses encouraged them to cross the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua, since Moses himself was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. Moses assured them that God Himself would go over with them, to help them defeat the nations there and possess the land.

He strengthened Joshua, reminding him that God would be with him as he led the people. Moses then wrote the law and gave it to the priests, commanding them to read it every seventh year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, not just as a reminder to Israel but also for the newer generations to learn to fear God.

God then told Moses to present himself and Joshua in the tabernacle of the congregation as the day of Moses' death was fast approaching. There, God told Moses that after his death, the Israelites would depart from Him and break His covenant. Great wrath would be upon them and they would be visited by many evils and troubles. He told Moses to write a song that would remind them of God's warnings against their future rebellion.

The Israelites faced an uncertain future as they prepared to cross the Jordan. However, God already knew what lay ahead. Let us learn to trust in the promises that God has given to us in the Bible. In these uncertain times, let us take heart that God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 14

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to trust fully in You, and not in my own wisdom and understanding.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 32–33***LESSON****Dealing with a disobedient people****DEUTERONOMY 32:35**

*To me belongeth vengeance,
and recompence; their foot
shall slide in due time: for
the day of their calamity
is at hand, and the things
that shall come upon them
make haste.*

Moses spoke the words of the song that he wrote under the inspiration of God. It began with a remembrance of God's goodness to Israel. But Jeshurun (the symbolic name for Israel) grew prosperous and forsook God, and went after strange gods. God hid His face from them and they suffered God's wrath. The song ended on a promising note: God would avenge their adversaries in the end.

Moses urged the Israelites to heed the words of the song because, in obeying the Lord, they would prolong their days in the Promised Land. On the same day, God told Moses to go up to Mount Nebo, where he would be shown the Promised Land and to die there. Before he went up, Moses gathered the Israelites together and blessed each of the tribes.

God dealt with the Israelites that same way as He deals with us on our pilgrim journey. We are disobedient and prone to disobey. However, God is gracious and merciful, as He patiently moulds each one of us according to His perfect plan. Therefore, do not be discouraged by the trials and tribulations that come your way. Rather, ask yourself what lesson is God trying to teach you today. What sins does He want you to forsake?

We should "count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations" [James 1:2–4]. Sanctification is a lifelong process. Take heart that we will be perfected when we finally see Jesus face to face.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 15

MEDITATION

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. – Hebrews 10:39

BIBLE LESSON
Deuteronomy 34

LESSON
A God-led life

VERSE 10

*And there arose not a
 prophet since in Israel like
 unto Moses, whom the
 LORD knew face to face,*

After blessing the tribes of Israel, Moses went up to Mount Nebo, and the Lord showed him the land that He had promised unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses died on the mount and was buried in a valley in Moab. The children of Israel mourned his death for 30 days. Joshua, having been charged by Moses, took over the leadership and the Israelites obeyed him as they did Moses.

Moses had a rich and blessed life, having escaped death at infancy, and blessed by a royal education in the courts of Pharaoh. Nevertheless, he identified with his Hebrew heritage and forsook the royal life to become a shepherd before being called of God to do His mighty works. We see also that Moses had his own failings as a human, but God patiently moulded him and made him a useful vessel for Him. Some may feel for Moses when he was not allowed to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land but we see in the Scriptures that he appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration [Matthew 17:3]. Hebrews 11:24–29 is a befitting epitaph for his life of faith in God.

In our Christian walk, we should also strive to live a life that is pleasing to God. To do that, we need to walk close to Him and do His bidding.

I will follow where He leadeth,
 I will pasture where He feedeth,
 I will follow all the way Lord,
 I will follow Jesus every day.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 16

CHALLENGE

Will you follow Jesus every day?

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 1***LESSON****Be strong and of a good courage****VERSE 9**

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

After wandering in the desert for 40 years, a new generation of Israelites was ready to enter Canaan. God commanded Joshua to lead over two million people into unfamiliar ground and conquer it. This was a difficult ministry, filled with tremendous challenges and obstacles far beyond Joshua's abilities to overcome. He did not have the strength and courage to accomplish the mission without God's help. God knew Joshua's weakness and told him "to be strong and of a good courage" four times in Chapter 1.

God wanted Joshua not only to be strong and courageous [v. 6–7, 9, 18] but also to obey His law [v. 7] and to study His Word constantly [v. 8]. Joshua took God's instructions to heart and obeyed them throughout the conquest of Canaan. In obedience, he found strength and courage in dealing with his squabbling people and formidable enemies.

For believers, every new job is a challenge. Without God, it can be frightening. With God, it can be a blessed experience. We have to deal with difficult people and tough situations every day. By asking God to direct our paths we can overcome many of life's challenges. Like Joshua and Israel, we need courageous faith. Courage does not mean "no fear". Had Joshua and the Israelites been without fear, God's command of "be strong and of a good courage" would be meaningless.

Whenever we are faced with challenges, we must remember that strength and courage are readily available from God if we obey His Word.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 17

THOUGHT

There is no situation, no problem or enemy that we ever face alone. God is always there as our constant support and help.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 2***LESSON****From harlotry to hall
of faith****VERSE 13**

*And that ye will save alive
my father, and my mother,
and my brethren, and my
sisters, and all that they
have, and deliver our lives
from death.*

The story of Rahab illustrates the wonder of salvation. Not only was Rahab a Gentile, she was also a despised prostitute. The token of her deliverance was a scarlet thread—a picture of the blood of Christ. She was taken from the lowest depths of human depravity to the greatest heights of God’s redeeming grace. She is also included in the “chapter of faith”: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” [Hebrews 11:31].

Rahab led a life of sin. She lived in a place of judgement—Jericho—that God was about to destroy. But she feared God’s judgement and sought deliverance. She received the promise of salvation and faithfully displayed the scarlet thread. She and her family were safe in the house when destruction came. She joined the Messianic line when Salmon married her. She was the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth, and their son Obed beget Jesse, the father of King David, through whose line came the Lord Jesus [Matthew 1:5–6].

We can see God’s purpose at work when Joshua sent out the spies—to save Rahab, a woman who is seemingly “beyond redemption”. In this episode, we see how far God can go in bringing a sinner to salvation. We may regard some people around us as being “impossible to save” but God’s hand is not short to save even people like Rahab.

God works in amazing ways to bring salvation to sinners, including us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 18

THOUGHT

Rahab saw the signs of the times—she put her trust in God for her deliverance.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 3***LESSON****Following the Ark****VERSE 17**

And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Aside from crossing the Jordan in a miraculous way, the most important feature of Chapter 2 is the Ark of the Covenant. It is mentioned 10 times in 17 verses. The Ark is Israel's most sacred treasure as it is the visible sign of God's presence. When the conquest was about to begin, Joshua did not dispatch his troops first. Instead, he sent the Ark-carrying priests. Joshua knew this was spiritual warfare. The Ark of God would clear the way for Israel.

God wanted the Israelites to keep a distance from the Ark to ensure that everyone had a clear view of it. "Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go" [v. 4] shows that the Ark led the way. Israel would accomplish an impossible task as they set their eyes upon God's presence. They must follow the Ark.

Two million people crossing the Jordan on dry ground had some immediate effects. God was magnified, Joshua was exalted, the Israelites were energised and the Canaanites, terrified. More importantly, for the Israelites it marks the end of a life by human effort and the beginning of a life by faith and obedience.

We often have neither sufficient strength nor wisdom to solve our problems. We need God. Our battle is really His and this was also what the Israelites learnt by following the Ark.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 19-20

THOUGHT

In order to cross the Jordan, the priests had to step into the water. Often God provides no clear solutions to our problems until we trust Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 4***LESSON****Remember the work
of God****VERSE 24**

*That all the people of
the earth might know the
hand of the LORD, that it is
mighty: that ye might fear
the LORD your God for ever.*

After 40 long years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were finally in the Promised Land. At this juncture, most Israelites would want to rush through the conquest and occupy Jericho. Why not take advantage of the terror felt by the Canaanites now? But God is never in a hurry. He took time to conquer the Israelites spiritually before they could conquer Jericho physically. For the chosen people of God, Canaan was not only a place of battle but also a place of trust. The Israelites learnt to trust God with everything they had and in everything they did.

God directed Joshua to build a memorial at Gilgal using 12 stones extracted from the River Jordan by 12 men, one from each tribe. This may seem like an insignificant step in their mission but God did not want His people to plunge into the job unprepared. He wanted them to first focus on Him, remember Who He is and what He has done for them.

From the descent to the bottom of the mighty river to the ascent out of it, every Israelite was busy running about. Yet in the midst of all the excitement, the tribes were asked to unite and set up a memorial for God. This job must be done immediately and not be postponed.

Similarly, when we are busy running about our daily lives, we must set aside time to build our own “memorials” to remember the wondrous work God has done for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 21-22

THOUGHT

Shall we not raise a pillar to our God, Who has brought us through dangers and distresses in so wonderful a way? [Matthew Henry]

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 5***LESSON****God provides****VERSE 12**

And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Despite Israel's sin, God had miraculously and providentially provided the Israelites with manna for 40 years during the time of their wilderness wanderings [Exodus 16:14–31]. In the bountiful Promised Land, the Israelites no longer required manna because the land God gave them was ready for planting and harvesting. He now provided for food from the land itself.

The practical lesson that we can draw from here is that we are not to expect extraordinary supplies when they can be obtained in an ordinary way. God works no unnecessary miracles. Prayer is not an alternative for preparation and faith is no substitute for hard work. It is blessed to remember that the Lord had not discontinued the manna when the people despised it [Numbers 11:6], not even when He severed His covenant-relationship with that evil generation. God had mercifully continued to provide manna for the sake of their children, who had now grown up and entered Canaan.

Miracles are not wrought or continued when unnecessary. As the ceasing of manna shows, it was an extraordinary provision.

Likewise, as the world goes through an unprecedented economic crisis, we can always rely on God's faithfulness to provide for us. Fear not, God can and will provide for His people. As beneficiaries of His goodwill, we should therefore not take His mercies for granted but maximise our God-given talents and resources to glorify Him in our daily living.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 23

PRAYER

Lord, please cleanse us from our sin of disobedience and allow us to enjoy Your daily provisions.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 6–7***LESSON****Obedience to God****JOSHUA 6:16**

And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

Never in military history has an enemy fortress been taken in such a manner. The city of Jericho was one of the oldest cities in the world. In some places, it had fortified walls up to 25 feet high, 20 feet thick. Soldiers standing guard on top of the walls could see for miles. Jericho was a symbol of military strength. The Canaanites considered Jericho impenetrable.

If you were Joshua, the leader of the Israelites, what military tactics would you employ to take the city of Jericho? What is deemed insurmountable for man becomes possible with God. Our Almighty God told Joshua that Jericho will be given to Israel, even before the fight started.

God's plan was foolproof and the Israelites had a guaranteed victory if they followed it. All Joshua had to do was to lead selected men in a certain order and walk round the walls of Jericho for seven days. As ridiculous as that sounded, Joshua simply obeyed and on the seventh day, after circling the walls for seven times, with a great shout, the mighty walls of Jericho collapsed and the Israelites went into the city and took it.

Life need not be so complicated. God's will is revealed for us in the Bible today. All we have to do is obey. The key to Joshua's success was his submission to God. When God spoke, he listened and obeyed. Will you put aside your pride today and obey God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 24

PRAYER

God, help me model myself after Joshua's obedience and submit myself to Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 8–9***LESSON****Commit everything
in prayer to God****JOSHUA 9:14***And the men took of their
victuals, and asked not
counsel at the mouth of the**LORD.*

God had specifically instructed Israel not to make treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan [Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:2] but the peace treaty seemed innocent enough. So Joshua and the leaders made this decision on their own.

Against the backdrop of cleansing herself from Achan's sin, Israel had successfully conquered the very important city of Ai. Led by Joshua, the Israelites offered burnt and peace offerings, conducted a revision and explicitly wrote the law of Moses [Joshua 8:32] upon the stones. Israel nevertheless suffered a moment of weakness and disobeyed God. Neither Joshua nor any of his advisers sought God's counsel when deciding on this treaty. As a consequence, they were fooled into forming a league with the Gibeonites. By failing to seek God's guidance in their plans, they had to deal with angry people and an awkward alliance later on.

Have you ever forgotten or neglected to pray to God regarding a matter because it seemed straightforward? By relying on your experience and knowledge, you are able to come to a quick and rational decision. Many of us are guilty of this and what seemed like a logical decision somehow leads to a disastrous outcome. Only then do we realise how frail and weak we are as mere mortals. Flee from such personal and false confidence.

Walk close to the Lord in constant prayer and learn to commit everything to the Lord, however small that matter may be.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 25

CHALLENGE

Do not think yourself higher than you should, instead seek God's will in everything you do. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" [Philippians 4:6].

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 10

LESSON

**The supremacy of
God**

VERSE 13

*And the sun stood still,
and the moon stayed, until
the people had avenged
themselves upon their
enemies. Is not this written
in the book of Jasher? So the
sun stood still in the midst
of heaven, and hastened not
to go down about a whole
day.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 26

After Gibeon had made an alliance with Israel, five kings—those of the Amorites—Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon gathered to smite Gibeon, prompting Joshua to come to Gibeon's aid.

Once again, God gave Joshua the outcome even before the fight started [v. 8]. God confounded their enemies, slew many of them at Gibeon, chased and smote them with the casting of hailstones. Time was, however, running out as night was falling. But instead of welcoming the respite and an opportunity to rest (the Israelites had been engaged in a tiring battle), Joshua longed for the extension of the hours of daylight so that he might complete his task and utterly exterminate the enemy.

This led to a remarkable display of faith as Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still, effectively giving his troops the extra daylight needed to win. From the natural standpoint, that appears like the act of a madman, even from a spiritual aspect, it seems to be the height of presumption. Yet it was neither the one nor the other. It was the exercise of full confidence in a miracle-working God.

Likewise, there must be unwearied efforts put forth by us in our spiritual warfare. We are not to rest satisfied with partial victories but to continue fighting until complete success is ours. No doubt Joshua and his men found that “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength” [Isaiah 40:31a], and so shall we, if we do likewise.

THOUGHT

God commands not only angels and men [Daniel 4:35] but also the birds of the air [1 Kings 17:4] and the wild beasts [Daniel 6:22], yea, to inanimate things. What blessedness it is to be a creature under the care of such an omnipotent God.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 11***LESSON
Obedience****VERSE 15**

*As the LORD commanded
Moses his servant, so did
Moses command Joshua,
and so did Joshua; he left
nothing undone of all that
the LORD commanded
Moses.*

Joshua followed every detail of God's commands to Moses. Joshua stepped into Moses' shoes and brought it to completion. Joshua's obedience is summarised into such enactments as Exodus 23:24, Exodus 34:11–13, Numbers 33:52 and Deuteronomy 12:3, in which he was asked to overthrow their idols and break down their images, destroy their altars and cut down their groves, destroy all their pictures and pluck down all their high places, break down their pillars and burn their groves with fire.

In short, the children of Israel were to destroy all the monuments and paraphernalia of pagan religion. The very names of their false gods should be "destroyed out of that place".

Thus Joshua was not free to follow his own caprice nor was he left to the exercise of his own judgement. He was required to carry out the detailed orders that he had received from his Master. How conscientiously and thoroughly he did so is found in this inspired record of the Holy Spirit: "He left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses."

The theme of obedience is repeated frequently in the book of Joshua, partly because obedience is one aspect of life we can control. We cannot control what other people think about, do or react to us. However, we can always choose and decide to obey God. Whatever new challenges we face, the Bible contains relevant instructions that we can choose to ignore or follow.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 27

CHALLENGE

Be aware of the rules of life by reading the Bible and following them obediently.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 12***LESSON****List of victories****VERSE 7**

And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir; which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;

This chapter gives a fitting conclusion to the military campaigns of Joshua, a summary of his numerous victories and a list of the 31 kings who were defeated by him. It may be strange to know that there were so many kings in such a small country.

A short account is also given of the conquests made by Israel both in the times of Moses and of Joshua. The land that the Lord gave to Israel consisted of two parts. The portion on the eastward side of the Jordan was subdued by Moses and given to the two-and-a-half tribes but the much larger section lay on the western side and was subjugated by Joshua and allotted to the nine- and-a-half tribes.

Joshua was 80 years of age when he entered the Promised Land. It was evident that God had given him vigour, uninterrupted victory and success as he led the Israelites and stormed the cities. This is a living picture of the goodness of God, proving that there had been a complete ratification and performance of the covenant made with Abraham—"unto thy seed will I give this land" [Genesis 12:7].

We learnt too that when our hearts are fixed upon the Lord our strength, we can be certain that our foes will be subdued before us. If He then be for us, who can be against us?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 28-29

PRAYER

Lord, teach us to run with patience the race that is set before us and always look unto You, the author and finisher of our faith.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 13***LESSON****The divine gift****VERSE I**

Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

Joshua was growing old and was informed by the Lord that much of the land of Canaan, which God had promised to Abraham, remained unconquered and unpossessed by the children of Israel [v. 1–5]. God set Joshua another task that he was capable of doing, that is, detailing to him the apportioning of Canaan among the tribes of Israel.

It appears that not all the inhabitants of the land had been driven out. Surely the Israelites had not moved into their territories. Yet God had Joshua divide the territories for the tribes based on their faith that God would drive out the inhabitants before them [v. 6].

Canaan was a divine gift from God to the Israelites. Nevertheless, it had to be conquered by them. This is similar to our Christian inheritance. We must tread the narrow path if we wish to enter into the fullness of life in Christ. We must persevere in the good fight of faith if we are to enter into the eternal inheritance.

While God acknowledged the enfeebled frame of Joshua, He did not for that reason encourage him to be slack. You may be stricken in years but the fact is that “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed”. No matter what your growth in grace or spiritual progress is, you are not as completely conformed to the image of God as you should be. There is still much for us to do. Let us “occupy till He comes” [Luke 19:13].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 30–31

THOUGHT

**Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest. –
Hebrews 4:11a**

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 14***LESSON****The divine lot****VERSE 2**

By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.

Joshua was invested with the divine authority to supervise the apportioning of the entire country of Canaan, not only the portions that Israel had already conquered and taken possession of but also the extensive sections that are still occupied by the Canaanites. This called for the exercise of faith that God would grant the tribes the possession of the unconquered lands.

Two distinct principles were laid down by the Lord in dividing the land. First, the size of the section allocated was to be determined by the numerical strength of the tribe to which it was given. Second, the land shall be divided by drawing lots [Numbers 26:53-56]. Such an arrangement not only accorded God His proper place in the transaction but also eliminates favouritism on the part of Israel's leaders and murmuring from the people.

God is the sole disposer of our lives. No man has a foot of land more than God has laid out for us in His all-wise providence. So whatever of this world's goods we obtain, let us bear in mind that "thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" [Deuteronomy 8:18a].

To submit to the divine lot is to submit to the good pleasure of the Lord. Do we submit to the divine will and beg God to choose for us—whether it be matter of our earthly vocation, life partner or temporal prosperity, which will be for His glory and our good?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 32

THOUGHT

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. – Psalm 127:1

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 15-16*

LESSON

Tribal portions**JOSHUA 15:1**

*This then was the lot of
the tribe of the children of
Judah by their families;
even to the border of
Edom the wilderness of
Zin southward was the
utmost part of the south
coast.*

Chapter 15 begins the geographical description of the different portions of Canaan that were allocated to Israel's tribes. The first two tribes to have made known to them their allotments were Judah and Joseph—Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan and Joseph in the northern part.

For our meditation today, we look at Caleb, who asked for and was given the inheritance of Hebron. Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak, fulfilling the promise of God [Joshua 14:12-13, 15:13-14]. Caleb was not just a man of strong faith and a great warrior, he was also a dutiful father. Hoping to find a worthy husband for his daughter, he issued a challenge to give Achsah his daughter to wife he that smite Kirjath-sepher and take it. The offer made by Caleb was an incentive to bravery, as he knew that only a man of faith and courage would attack such a place.

On the contrary, we learnt that the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim took their inheritance but did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer. They were allowed to stay and serve under tribute. Since the Ephraimites were strong enough to subject the Canaanites to pay tribute, they should be strong enough to drive them out.

Their disobedience was due to the spirit of greed. They treasured their financial gain more than submission to God [Joshua 16: 4, 10]. They soon followed the heathen ways of the Canaanites and become idolaters themselves.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 33

THOUGHT

We can be both sure and on comfortable ground when we take our stand upon God's promises, expecting a fulfilment. "Do as Thou hast said" [2 Samuel 7:25b].

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 17-18***LESSON****Indolence in final possession****JOSHUA 18:3**

And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?

Without much opposition from the Canaanites, the Israelites had settled down to rest, though more than half of Israel had not yet obtained their inheritance. They were pleased with their present condition. The spoil of the cities they had taken served them to live plentifully for the present. They were not prepared to go through pain and hardship to capture the unconquered land that God had promised them.

In like manner, countless Christians make professions, join the Church, imagine that their sins have been forgiven and begin to rest on their laurels. They make no attempt at mortifying their lusts, no serious efforts to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, and no progress in Christian living. They do not make pleasing and obeying God their daily concern. But they hope to obtain the reward of inheritance.

“How long are ye slack to go to possess the land?” Joshua did not wait for a reply from the people to his reproving question. He asked them to send men from each tribe and instructed them to survey and describe the land according to their inheritance and report to him. Aroused from their stupor and shamed by their leader’s rebuke, they performed his bidding.

While God is sovereign, it does not exclude the exercise of human responsibility and the moral need to act intelligently. There is no unwillingness on God’s part to give: the unwillingness to seek and take is always on our side.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 34

THOUGHT

A Christian is required to “continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel”.

BIBLE LESSON

Joshua 19

LESSON

Joshua, example of a great leader

VERSE 49

When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them.

Towards the close of the twentieth century, many leading nations were euphoric and hopeful that this world would become a better place through the concept of globalisation and free-trade agreements. However, these “trade” agreements have very little to do with trade issues.

The current economic crisis was triggered partly by the unbridled greed of men, and their unwarranted confidence in money. It is like the foolish men who said, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.” But God says, “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow” [James 4:13–14].

Contrast this with what men do with the sure promises of God. He said to Joshua, “For unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them” [Joshua 1:6]. The Israelites had to do one thing to inherit the land. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein” [Joshua 1:8a].

Under the faithful leadership of Joshua, the Israelites took possession of the land. It was divided between the nine-and-a-half tribes. They rewarded Joshua with the city according to the Lord. That Joshua was the last to receive his inheritance speaks well of him as a leader. He harboured no ambition for riches or leadership position other than to obey God’s leading.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA I

THOUGHT

The leaders of this world often enrich themselves. This is certainly not the case in the true Church where whosoever desires to be chief, must be a servant, because our Lord came not to be served but to serve.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 20***LESSON****Taking refuge****VERSE 2**

Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses.

After the distribution of the land, six towns were set apart, in accordance with the Mosaic instructions in Numbers 35, as places of refuge for unintentional and accidental homicides (manslaughter). The sanctuaries were not temples or altars, as in other countries, but inhabited cities. The design was not to screen criminals but to afford the person who had committed such an offence protection from the vengeance of the deceased's relatives until it could be ascertained whether the death had resulted from an accident and momentary passion, or from premeditated malice.

The institution of the cities of refuge, together with the rules prescribed for the guidance of those who sought an asylum within their walls, was an important provision, tending to secure the ends of justice as well as of mercy.

When innocent blood has been shed, it cries out for justice and vengeance. This is expiated either by the death of the murderer [Numbers 35:33] or by atonement [Deuteronomy 21:7–9]. If this is not done, it brings upon the land the wrath of God and disaster [2 Samuel 21]. In this connection, one realises the importance of having fair courts to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused.

Asylum in the cities of refuge also applies to any stranger living within Israel. It testifies to God's care for all humanity. He is impartial in dealing with all nationalities and will receive any stranger who will adopt the true religion, though he is not an Israelite by birth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 2

THOUGHT

The death of the high priest in verse 6 is said to symbolise the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's High Priest, not only after the order of Melchizedek, but who made satisfaction for all sins, both unintentional and intentional.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 21***LESSON****God always fulfils
His promises to the
letter****VERSE 43**

*And the LORD gave unto
Israel all the land which
he sware to give unto their
fathers; and they possessed
it, and dwelt therein.*

This is such a wonderful verse because it shows that our God is a faithful and covenant-keeping God. He made a covenant [Genesis 13:14–18] to Abraham concerning the land and that the nations of the earth be blessed through his seed, despite his wife’s infertility and age. Abraham had been faithful to God time and again, “and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice” [Genesis 22:18].

All the land was already divided between the Israelites and there was not a single army of the Canaanites left to oppose them. Those who were left in the land served under tribute, proof of their complete subjugation.

The Israelites had as much of the land in actual possession as they could occupy. As they increased, God enabled them to drive out the rest of the ancient inhabitants. But when they were unfaithful, God permitted their enemies to trouble them, sometimes even to prevail against them. God promised to give them the land on condition of their obedience and to “pluck them off” when they were unfaithful [Deuteronomy 28:63].

God is faithful in blessings and judgement. There is not once in which Israel was judged for her obedience to God. It is foolhardy for some Christians to accuse God that He has not fulfilled His promise made to Abraham regarding the land. Scripture is very clear that God has fulfilled all the promises He made.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 3-4

THOUGHT

**There failed not ought of any good thing which
the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all
came to pass. – Joshua 21:45**

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 22***LESSON****Zeal for God but with discretion****VERSE 12**

And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.

The two-and-a-half tribes left for the east side of the Jordan after receiving sound advice from Joshua. They returned and built an altar by the side of Jordan, which the rest of the other tribes suspected was an altar for idolatrous purposes or to make a schism in the national worship.

The Law of God strictly prohibited the people from having two altars [Exodus 20:24] because the Lord wished to be worshipped only in one place. The majority of Israel who settled on the west side of the Jordan was prepared to go to war against them.

The motive for erecting the altar was to testify that though they were separated from their kindred by the river, they were, however, united with them in religion. The altar was “not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you” [v. 28b]. Their zeal was commendable but it should have been guided with discretion. They ought to have sought advice from the high priest or consulted their brethren about their intention to erect an altar so that they would not be misconstrued.

The nine-and-a-half tribes’ zeal for God was admirable, and all the more so because it was tempered, guided and governed by the meekness of wisdom. They did not immediately wage war but sent their ambassadors to enquire into the merits of the cause [v. 13–14]. They moved not a finger in the way of inflicting punishment until they were sure of the crime.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 5-6

PRAYER

Grant, O Lord, discretion when it comes to defending Your Word.

BIBLE LESSON*Joshua 23–24*

LESSON

Victory is the Lord's**JOSHUA 23:10**

*One man of you shall chase
a thousand: for the LORD
your God, he it is that
fighteth for you, as he hath
promised you.*

Joshua, now old and frail, gathered the tribes of Israel just before his death. He reminded them of what God had done for them, and what He would do provided they keep His commandments and cleave to Him. They are not to mix with the Gentiles and partake in idolatrous practices. Otherwise, they should expect all evils and calamities, utter ruin and destruction to come on them.

Except for the loss at the battle of Ai, the Israelites had an uninterrupted series of successes in the wars of Canaan. They had not only conquered the Canaanites but were put in full possession of their land. “Behold, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain” [Joshua 23:4a]. There remained parts of the land where Canaanites still dwelt. God assured them of victory provided they obeyed His Word [Joshua 23:6–7]. As long as they continued in steadfast adherence, God would secure them a course of brilliant and easy victories.

We have to be very courageous in fighting both spiritual and physical battles because “the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you” [Joshua 23:3b]. Do not think that we must be more in number than our enemies, for it is the Lord that shall drive out “nations great and strong”. Under His direction and influence one of us can conquer a thousand. All that is needed is to keep a firm resolution “to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses” [Joshua 23:6].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 7

THOUGHT

Keep with care, do with diligence and eye what is written with sincerity.

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 1–2***LESSON****Vengeance is God's,
not ours****JUDGES 1:7**

*And Adoni-bezek said,
Threescore and ten kings,
having their thumbs and
their great toes cut off,
gathered their meat under
my table: as I have done,
so God hath requited me.
And they brought him to
Jerusalem, and there he
died.*

Adoni-bezek (the lord of Bezek) had defeated 70 kings and he humiliated them by cutting off their thumbs and big toes. Adoni-bezek was the first king encountered by Judah and Simeon in their march of conquest. After he was defeated, the Israelites did the same thing to him. Adoni-bezek reaped what he had sown.

Some people see this practice of mutilation as unnecessarily cruel. However, God's Law provided for such forms of judgement. "If a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again" [Leviticus 24:19–20].

Physical mutilation disqualifies a person from religious and political office [Leviticus 21:16–24]. Cutting off the thumbs and big toes also renders a person unfit for future warfare. In the New Testament, the practice of an "eye for eye" is replaced by the royal law of love. Our Lord says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ... whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" [Matthew 5:38–41].

Turn the other cheek and walk the second mile. Give freely and generously. By these, we show the love of God and shine as lights in this world.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 8**

THOUGHT

**In the world, sharing God's truth and love, but
not part of the world!**

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 3***LESSON****No need to be a
“somebody” for
God’s use****VERSE 9**

*And when the children
of Israel cried unto the
LORD, the LORD raised up
a deliverer to the children
of Israel, who delivered
them, even Othniel the son
of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger
brother.*

We find in the first three judges (deliverers) individuals who stepped out in faith and trusted in God. Othniel was a man who refused to allow his age to stand in the way. Ehud refused to allow what other people conceived to be a disability to stand in his way. Shamgar refused to allow his lack of better equipment to do the same.

God uses completely different kinds of individuals in His service. God works in a variety of ways through a variety of people. While He does not deviate from His truth, neither does He always comply with our expectations. God will use you if you let Him. God made you the way you are and will use the abilities (or disabilities) that He has given you.

Look to Him for your strength. God uses people who draw their strength from Him. By God’s standard, all of us can qualify. The issue is not whether He can and will use us to His glory. It is whether we will trust Him to use us and make ourselves available.

Hudson Taylor, as he looked back over 30 years during which he had seen 600 missionaries respond to his vision to reach China through his China Inland Mission, summarised what he had learnt: “God is sufficient for God’s work ... God chose me because I was weak enough. God does not do His great works by large committees. He trains someone to be quiet enough and little enough, and then He uses them!”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 9

THOUGHT

And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? – Exodus 4:2

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 4–5***LESSON****Nothing is
impossible with God****JUDGES 4:8**

*And Barak said unto her, If
thou wilt go with me, then
I will go: but if thou wilt
not go with me, then I will
not go.*

In troubled times our faith tends to falter. We forget that when God calls, He also provides. In Barak, it was a hesitant faith. No doubt fear played a part. He needed the support of Deborah's faith in God's unseen power. Perhaps he feared that he lacked the necessary leadership abilities. Sometimes we forget that God is not so much interested in our skills as He is in our will, not so much interested in our abilities as in our availability.

How many of us have never served God because we have refused every opportunity that has come our way? We do not allow God to prove Himself to us or exhibit His power through us. There are times in our lives when we cannot see how things are going to turn out. Those are the times we need to remember that the Lord's battles are always won through faith.

When Christians do not trust God enough to step out in faith to follow Him, we lose out on the opportunity for God to fully work through us. Worse still, we may later find ourselves expending time and energy hopelessly trying to make up for the difference.

Barak's faith may have only been the size of a mustard seed but it was in God. Little faith, rightly directed, is far superior to great faith in the wrong object. Barak gained strength in weakness. If you have God's promise and know God's will, then it is time to move forward by faith.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 10

THOUGHT

The possible becomes impossible when we give in to fear.

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 6***LESSON****How not to know the will of God****VERSE 37**

Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

When we want to evade a commitment, we have all kinds of excuses. When it comes to God, we ask for all kinds of miraculous signs. Gideon dictated to God the only way he would believe. He dictated the time frame in which God could work and asked God to suspend the laws of nature in order to support his need for assurance. When we do that, we are demanding that God leads us on our terms, not His. That is why fleece setting is motivated by doubt, not faith! When you think about it, Gideon's request was both absurd and presumptuous.

Fleece setting is still a method that some Christians use to try to discover the will of God. You tell God, "Lord, I have two options. If You want me to follow Plan A, then please do this by Tuesday. Then I will know that it is what You want me to do. If You do not, then I will follow Plan B."

Fleece setting is not only evidence of our unbelief but it is also evidence of our pride. God has to do what we tell Him to do before we will do what He tells us to do. God's answer to Gideon's demand concerning the fleece demonstrates that our God is a God of compassion. Instead of rebuking Gideon, the Lord propped up Gideon's faith with a miracle.

Gideon was a special student in God's class for slow learners but we should be comforted because many of us are like that.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 11**

THOUGHT

God will meet us in our weakness if it is for the purpose of being obedient.

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 7***LESSON****Be completely obedient to His instructions****VERSE 2**

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

God has decided to make weak Israel even weaker so that they would be more reliant on Him and through that, He could show us more of Himself, His work and prevent us from stealing His glory, “for the Lord thy God [is] a jealous God”.

An interesting point to note is that the Israelites themselves did not know that it was a test. God tests us, looking for hearts that are truly His, and these tests come in the ordinary events of our daily lives often without our knowledge. In Gideon’s case, 300 Israelites remained to fight 135,000 Midianites. Israel was outnumbered 450 to one.

It is daunting and scary when faced with overwhelming odds. Trials are never pleasant when you are in them. They would not be called trials otherwise. But we can take heart that God has a purpose for them. It is for the strengthening of your faith and the displaying of His strength through you.

God does not need large numbers to accomplish His purposes nor does He need gifted leaders. The important thing is for us to be available for God’s use just as He sees fit. We may not fully understand His plans but we can fully trust His promises and His faith. Hold on to the promises and encouragement God gives you in whatever form it takes. The old formula still stands: “God says it—that settles it.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 12-13

THOUGHT

When God takes away what we think we need, often He is taking away what He knows we do not need!

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 8***LESSON****Remember who is King****VERSE 23**

And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

Gideon led his army in a mopping-up operation to destroy the remnants of the Midianite forces. But the Ephraimites were offended because they had not been called to participate in this victorious campaign. Though their motives were noble, they displayed self-centredness in not seeking to understand that Gideon was simply following God's instructions. Gideon's "soft answer" pacified them.

However, Gideon dealt with the men of Succoth and Penuel more harshly. Both cities had contemptuously rejected Gideon's request for food for his weary troops. In so doing, they had committed acts of treason against God and His people. In due course, Gideon returned in triumph and exacted the promised penalties of these two cities [v. 13–17]. Gideon had acted judicially with Succoth and Penuel because theirs was in fact a civil crime against the theocratic government.

The Israelites wanted to make Gideon king, forgetting that it was in fact God Who led the battle and gave the victory. Gideon's answer [v. 23] appeared to be a godly one but his subsequent behaviour reflected otherwise. His request for a portion of the plunder to make an ephod of gold suggests that he wanted a monument to his victories. His lavish lifestyle was also exactly like those of the pagan kings.

The lesson for Christians is to be wary of the sins of pride and immorality. Even when we meet with success in our service to God, we must never forget that He alone is the King and all glory is due unto Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 14–15**

THOUGHT

To God be the glory, great things He hath done.

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 9***LESSON****God will judge the wicked****VERSE 56**

Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren.

The events of this chapter mirror much of the history of mankind, where deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart are constantly displayed.

After Gideon died, the Israelites went back to their Canaanite idols. One of Gideon's sons, Abimelech, went to live in Shechem with his mother, a concubine of Gideon. They conspired with the people of Shechem to make Abimelech king by capturing and killing all of Abimelech's half-brothers. But Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, escaped. He went to Mount Gerizim and shouted his famous parable about the trees deciding on their best leader. Jotham's story is in fact a cry to God for justice.

And God did judge. He stirred up trouble between the people and Abimelech. Gaal led a coup against him but it failed. Abimelech killed him and his followers along with the people in the Tower of Shechem. Subsequently, at the city of Thebez, a woman dropped a stone from the tower and hit Abimelech on the head. Abimelech had his armour bearer kill him, not wanting to die at the hands of a woman.

The lesson from God's Word is clear. Sooner or later, the wicked, like Abimelech, Ahab and Jezebel [1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 9], will face God's judgement. Christians need to remember though that God's judgement has been spared on us. We should be thankful that the God Who judged Abimelech is also a merciful God Who freely pardons all who come to Him in repentance in the name of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 16

THOUGHT

Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God. – Job 18:21

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 10–11***LESSON****Take your vows
seriously****JUDGES 11:36**

And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

After Gideon, Tola and Jair led Israel for more than 40 years. Israel once again “did evil in the sight of the Lord” and was turned over to the Philistines and the Ammonites for 18 years. The compassionate God heard Israel’s pleas and provided deliverance in the person of Jephthah. This mighty warrior drove back the Ammonites. Unfortunately, he made a rash vow to God [Judges 11:30–31]. The nature of Jephthah’s vow has been vigorously debated by scholars over the years.

Some believe that Jephthah offered his daughter as a human sacrifice to God. He was probably ignorant of the divine will of God and the Mosaic laws against human sacrifices. A second interpretation was that he did not kill his daughter but had vowed that in case of victory, he would dedicate to God for tabernacle service one member of his household. As a godly man who knew Israel’s history intimately, he must have known that God abhors the pagan practice of human sacrifices. Furthermore, Judges 11:29 says that the Spirit of God was upon him.

Whatever the interpretation, Christians should remember that our vows to God should not be used to barter for God’s favours but to express our gratitude to Him. Difficult passages of Scripture need not confuse us.

As Matthew Henry put it: “What is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough ... The Holy Ghost will guide to all truth in every passage, so far as it is needful to be understood.”

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 17**

THOUGHT

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. – Ecclesiastes 5:2a

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 12–13***LESSON****God visits His people****JUDGES 13:18**

*And the angel of the LORD
said unto him, Why askest
thou thus after my name,
seeing it is secret?*

What an honour it must be if our prime minister were to visit your home. Can you imagine then what it would be like if an angel or God Himself were to appear to you? No wonder Manoah declared to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God” [Judges 13:22].

The Angel of the Lord (Hebrew: *Malach Yahweh*) who came to Manoah and his wife to announce the birth of their son and instruct them on how to prepare him for God’s service is the very same angel of the Lord who heard the cries of His people and appeared to Moses in a burning bush in Mount Horeb and introduced Himself as “I AM”. In this occasion, He told Manoah that His name was “secret”. This word is also translated as “Wonderful”, the very same name in the much-quoted Isaiah 9:6. When Manoah and his wife witnessed the “wondrous” manner in which He accepted their sacrifice, they immediately fell on their faces to the ground [Judges 13:19–20].

Today, it is extremely unlikely that we will ever come face to face with the angel of the Lord or any other angel for that matter. Neither should we crave to witness such a “theophany”. God has spoken to us in these last days through His Son [Hebrews 1:2] and will continue to speak to us daily, if we so wish, through His Word, the Bible.

May our attitude be, “Speak; for thy servant heareth” [1 Samuel 3:10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 18

PONDER

**What is man, that God should be mindful of him?
And the son of man, that God should visit him? –
Psalm 8:4**

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 14***LESSON****A tarnished hero****VERSE 4**

But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

What joy and hope must have filled the hearts of the childless Manoah and his wife when their son arrived, as promised by God. They raised Samson as a Nazarite, and the Lord blessed the child with exceptional strength.

But sadly, Samson grew into a self-willed and violent young man who completely disobeyed God and his parents. One day, Samson stormed into his home and demanded that his parents get a certain daughter of the Philistines to be his wife. His parents pleaded in vain with him to reconsider and marry one of the Israelite girls instead. Although some good ultimately came out of this ungodly marriage, it does not justify Samson's actions.

It was not God Who caused Samson to lust after the Philistine girl [v. 4]. As in numerous other occasions recorded in the Bible, the sovereign God can turn our decisions to fulfil His purpose, even when we make them in transgression of His laws. The key lesson is that though God can make evil man serve His purposes, it never justifies the evil that man does.

Someone today may justify his desire to marry a non-Christian because he trusts that some good will come out of it. Things may work out that way but, as in Samson's case, it will come at a great personal cost. No matter how much good God can bring out of even the bad things we do, He can always bring far more good out of our obedience—and we ourselves experience much less pain.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 19

REMEMBER

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. – Ephesians 6:1

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 15

LESSON

The saint must walk alone

VERSE 11

Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

Here is an account of Samson being denied by his wife and, by a strange stratagem, he burnt up the standing crops of the Philistines. The Philistines burnt his wife and her father who started the strife. Samson in turn slaughtered those who brought the Philistines encroaching upon Judah, who bound Samson and delivered him to the Philistines. The Spirit of God came upon him and he slew a thousand of them. Being athirst, he called upon God Who wonderfully supplied him with water.

Samson fought the Lord's battle all alone. None of his own 3,000 people helped him. He prayed alone after the amazing victory over the Philistines that God wrought through him. None aided him in his exhaustion. He had to walk alone.

"The loneliness of the Christian results from his walk with God, a walk that must often take him away from the fellowship of Christians as well as from that of the unregenerate world. His God-given instincts cry out for companion with others of his kind, others who can understand his longings, his aspirations, his absorption in the love of Christ; and because within his circle of friends there were so few who share his inner experiences, he is forced to walk alone." – Tozer

May our inability to find such human companionship drive us to seek God what we can find nowhere else. There in solitude we learn what we could not have learnt in the crowd—that Christ is all in all.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 20

THOUGHT

Loneliness seems to be one price the saint must pay for his saintliness – A. W. Tozer

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 16***LESSON****How the mighty fell!****VERSE 20**

*And she said, The
Philistines be upon thee,
Samson. And he awoke out
of his sleep, and said, I will
go out as at other times
before, and shake myself.
And he wist not that the
LORD was departed from
him.*

Here is an account of Samson's encounter with two harlots. By the one, he was brought into great danger and narrowly escaped. By the other, he was betrayed into the hands of the Philistines after the secret of his great strength was exposed. Having him in their hands, the Philistines put out his eyes, imprisoned him and made sport of him in their temple. Samson prayed for renewed strength from the Lord, pulled down the temple and destroyed multitudes with the loss of his own life.

Samson was a mighty man of God yet not without his weaknesses. We constantly read of Samson as being among the Philistines and scarcely with the Israelites. The most difficult part of his work was to avoid temptation while carrying out his duties. His enemies soon found out his weakness and defeated him. His real strength did not lie in his hair though it was the sign of his consecration to God. When it was gone, it was a proof that God no longer was with him to acknowledge him as His servant. His vow as a Nazarite was broken and he became weak, like any other man.

Let us be warned by Samson's fall to preserve our purity and watch against all fleshly lusts. All exposure to sin is perilous. It is much safer to flee from temptation than to fight against it.

The best way to fight against sin is to run away from it [Genesis 39:12].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 21**

THOUGHT

**Abstain from all appearance of evil. – 1
Thessalonians 5:22**

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 17***LESSON****Almost a Christian****VERSE 13**

*Then said Micah, Now
know I that the LORD will
do me good, seeing I have a
Levite to my priest.*

This chapter relates the first rise of idolatry in Israel after the death of Joshua, which began in Mount Ephraim, occasioned by a sum of money stolen by a man from his mother. When it was restored, part was converted to idolatrous use. As there was no king, the idolatry took hold and spread. The idolater not only made one of his sons a priest but also hired a Levite for another.

When providence unexpectedly brought a Levite, Micah thought it was a sign of God's favour to him. What miserable logic for one favourable case. He thought it was so good that it would serve for all the rest. It was wrong for a Levite to discharge priestly duties. Such honour belonged only to Aaron and his sons. He was wrong to have the sanctuary of God in his own house and to have an image representing God. In truth, he was totally wrong though he thought he was wonderfully pious.

What a small vestige of evidence will suffice for an unregenerate man to think himself saved. A short formal prayer offered up once a day, a chapter of the Bible read once a week, attending worship each Lord's Day, some money given for religious purposes are thought to be sufficient proof that his name is written in heaven while still a stranger to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

Let us never rest content in the forms of religion without the power of godliness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 22

THOUGHT

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. – 2 Peter 1:10

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 18–19***LESSON****The falling away****JUDGES 19:22**

Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

Chapter 18 gives an account of how idolatry crept into the family of Micah, translated into the tribe of Dan and gained a settlement in a city. Chapter 19 tells a most tragic story of the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, of the tribe of Benjamin. This seems to have been done not long after the death of Joshua, when there was not yet a king or judge in Israel. The Danites' idolatry and the Benjamites' immorality lead to that general apostasy.

“Who would have expected such extreme abomination to come out of the loins of Jacob? This was the sin of Sodom, and is thence called sodomy. The Dead Sea, which was the standing monument of God's vengeance upon Sodom, for its filthiness, was one of the boundaries of Canaan, and lay not many miles off from Gibeah. We may suppose the men of Gibeah had seen it many a time, and yet would not take warning by it, but did worse than Sodom [Ezekiel 16:48] and sinned just after the similitude of their transgression.” – Matthew Henry

Why were not these sons of Belial struck blind, as the Sodomites were? Why were not fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon their city? See and admire the patience of God Who deferred His judgement.

Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient [Romans 1:28]. God never forsakes us until we forsake Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 23**

HYMN

**O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.**

BIBLE LESSON*Judges 20–21***LESSON****Presumption and
self-confidence****JUDGES 21:25**

*In those days there was no
king in Israel: every man
did that which was right in
his own eyes.*

So melancholic the story concludes in the last two chapters. The Levite's cause was heard in a general convention of the tribes. They resolved to avenge his quarrel upon the men of Gibeah. The Benjamites defended the criminals. All the tribes of Israel gathered in vast numbers against the tribe of Benjamin. There was bloodshed in the field of battle. Sixty-five thousand men fell and the tribe of Benjamin was left desolate with 600 men.

When the Israelites calmed down, they began seriously to reflect on what had passed. They were grieved for the afflictions of Benjamin. Their concern moved them to rebuild the depleted tribe. More bloodshed followed to procure wives for the Benjamites.

This was the great error of the Israelites in this tragedy. They decided first what the course should be and then asked God to sanction it. "Who shall go up first?" "Shall we go up at all?" It is like saying, "Shall we do that which we have already decided to do?" Then they asked God, "Why is this come to pass in Israel?" What a mess they created! God will not be mocked. He left them to themselves until they learnt from their deplorable mistake and the bitter lesson of not first seeing God's counsel. He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul.

There is no safety until we first ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord. In all our ways acknowledge God and He will direct our paths.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOSHUA 24

THOUGHT

**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man;
but the end thereof are the ways of death. –
Proverbs 14:12**

