

From Egypt to Canaan

Part 5

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Duration	00:45:02
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/rkc003/from-egypt-to-canaan

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[00:00:00] The first verse of this first chapter of Numbers says, And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month and the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt.

Now this places the time of this book of Numbers that we are going to be looking into, given many of the incidents of the journeys of the children of Israel.

We were in our last meeting last evening, tracing where they came to Sinai.

And much took place at Sinai.

[00:01:02] We trace out in the various scriptures, we find that they spent 11 months at Sinai.

They came in the third month of the first year. And here we are still in the second month, in the second year.

Now we stopped at Exodus chapter 34, I believe, and the rest of the book of Exodus has to do with the building of the tabernacle.

And Moses got instructions as to the tabernacle when he was on the mount.

So we're not taking up the subject of the tabernacle, that's a subject in itself. As we have on the chart and we listed, we're occupied with the journeys of the children [00:02:04] of Israel.

They went from place to place. So we pass over that. And then Leviticus is also given at Sinai.

The Lord spoke out of the tabernacle when it was set up. And so that covers the whole book of Leviticus. And that brings us now to Numbers, where we get instructions further for their encampment around the tabernacle and the journeys and various incidents that took place.

Now the book of Leviticus has to do with the offerings, especially.

And we have charts on the tabernacle as a subject, it takes us several weeks to just get a little outline of it with a good many meetings. We have a chart also on Leviticus, the five main offerings of Leviticus. [00:03:05] And those are subjects that come in this book. Now we come to the book of

Numbers, and that is truly the wilderness book. And this wonderful Pentateuch of Moses, the five books, Genesis, the book of beginnings, Exodus is true to his name, the going out of Egypt, exit.

And the redemption book, as it were. And Leviticus is the sanctuary book, coming into the presence of God, learning how to worship.

Then Numbers is the journeys, especially the wilderness. We've had some in Exodus, of course.

And so here, mainly as we've indicated on the sheet of the schedule of meetings, there are three great points.

C.H. [00:04:01] McIntosh points them out, and I've always appreciated it. As to these, probably the first three chapters, at least. First of all, in this chapter one, we're not going to read all this chapter, it has to do with all 11 tribes.

I say 11 because the Levites were a special company and were not numbered. And so it's called the book of numberings, and it's the numbering of the people. Verse two says, take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the numbers of their names, every male by their poles, from 20 years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel.

Now, that's a phrase that occurs throughout this chapter, those that are able to go forth to war.

So the first thing we have here, there are three W's. [00:05:05] I always like these words with alliteration that you can join together. And here we have a nation of warriors, that's the first W, a nation of warriors.

And then, in the second chapter we have their encampment, the order where they were to place themselves around the tabernacle. Then in the third chapter, verse three, these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests, which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office. And they are mentioned. So we have the second point, is a family of worshipers, that's the second W, a family of worshipers.

[00:06:05] And we'll make those applications for ourselves. Then thirdly, we have the nation of Levites, verse 41, not the nation, the tribe.

And thou shalt take the Levites for me, I am the Lord.

And the Levites, verse 45, it says, were instead of the firstborn. And they were consecrated for the service of the Lord, they waited on the priests so they were workers.

Now put all these three together. We have a nation of warriors, a family of worshipers, a tribe of workers.

Now you get all three of those words are applicable for the Christian.

[00:07:07] Those who can be warriors, able to go forth to war, they had to be 20 years old, some maturity physically and so on.

And then God wants worshipers, those who represented the people who went in. God said before the covenant of Sinai, he would make them a kingdom of priests.

And that's what God has in mind. Now in the New Testament, the Apostle Peter, and he's especially, as we said, a wilderness book, he speaks of every believer is a priest.

Every born-again believer is a priest, a royal priest, and a holy priest.

[00:08:05] Now what is the function of a priest?

He was to go into God.

He could draw near.

Now Israel under the law, and for those of you who weren't here last night, we saw that Israel took themselves off of the ground of grace, the covenant of promises, and put themselves on the covenant of law.

God proposed it to them, to test them, to prove them. And he says, if you obey, you do all these things, then the blessings would come.

And we saw the disaster before they ever got the tables of law in their hands, or came into the camp, they had broken the very first commandment, thou shall have no other gods before thee. And there was idolatry, and we went, I won't go through that again, but that's what took [00:09:06] place there at Sinai.

But God gave the law the second time on the ground of grace and law. He says, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, to God's sovereignty and of grace. So they were in a place of distance.

That's why it's a family of worshipers.

But in the New Testament, it represents what each of us should be, a worshiper, a priest. When drawn near to God, give thanks and praise. That's why in our Lord's Day morning meeting, for remembrance and worship, we don't have one man in charge, as systems do.

The Holy Spirit is in charge, and there's a freedom to use whomsoever he will. The women are not given the place of public representation, though they are priests also, [00:10:04] but not given that place to publicly lead the praises and the activities of the assembly. And we all should be workers. So we get those three things, that's the lessons, in brief, of these early chapters of Numbers. We would start, of course, with priests or worshipers. God seeks worshipers, they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. And he's looking for workers.

The Levites, they assisted the priests. They were given to the priestly family.

And so there are many little things to do. Levitical service. They all ought to be interested. Now every Christian should be active in these three spheres. Well, I better modify that a little bit, to say every Christian, because the warriors [00:11:06] had to be able.

You wouldn't expect a babe to be a warrior, a babe in Christ. And that brings us to, just to illustrate in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, it's often been said, in the first chapter the baby is born, his new birth. And in the second chapter he speaks about standing, and the baby learns to stand. That's growth. It doesn't happen all at once, as we know. And the third chapter, the baby learns to walk.

And then we get the next thought, I missed one, I knew it didn't just fit right.

The second chapter the baby is nursed, well you know how that is. The baby don't grow right up to standing, it's born, new birth in the first chapter. [00:12:02] It's nursed, and there were nursing fathers and mothers in the second chapter. Then the third chapter, the baby learns to stand, if you stand fast. Stand on your own feet. And then fourthly learns to walk, in the fourth chapter he speaks of walking. And then in the fifth chapter, put on the armor. And so the baby has grown up to be a soldier. So that's what it means by able, able to go forth to war. And so in that sense, there's that, those features for every Christian, for in the Epistle to Timothy, a young man, Paul writes, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

And we're called to be soldiers, to stand up for the truth. And you know a soldier has to stand on guard. And so it's not always a fighting, but vigilance and on guard. [00:13:02] So that would cover these first chapters here. And I like to stress these things, and it's putting it very simply and concisely. Then in the fourth chapter, the Levites were given, well, before we come to that, we find in the second chapter that all these tribes were assigned their place around the tabernacle.

Now the tabernacle indicated here was set up and on every side, roundabout, there were people occupied. It was a great company. We said something like three and a half million, it's estimated, there must have been there. And they were not given their rights as people talk about.

We have no rights, you know, but there's so much talk about rights, I got a right to this [00:14:02] and right to that and so on. They were assigned their place.

And so in the body of Christ, we don't choose, we want to be an arm or a mouth or a ear or a tongue or what.

We're given a place by the Spirit of God and it's for us to find our place. So they were assigned their place to pitch their tents. That's in the second chapter.

And by their standard, the tribe of Dan, they were together. The tribe of Joseph or Judah, they were together.

And the Levites were the first ones around this tabernacle to keep the charge of the Lord. And they were assigned their service. You know, it's beautiful just to read all this and one thought comes out as you read these early chapters of Numbers, that God is a God of order.

[00:15:02] There's no sixes and sevens, as we say, things in disorder.

And we had that in 1 Corinthians 14, don't we? God is a God of order.

There's order in God's universe and there should be order in the assembly and it's wonderful when things function. And they were placed even as to their order in the march.

This tabernacle was for the wilderness where they were journeying. The temple is for the land where it's permanent. And so they had to take this tabernacle down oftentimes and so there was appointed service.

Well Moses and Aaron were there to oversee all and Moses the representative of God and Aaron was the high priest and his sons, his family, were the priests.

[00:16:04] Well now then, what's the lesson for us? Who is to tell us or appoint our service or our place in the assembly? Well it's the Holy Spirit.

We had that in 1 Corinthians 12, the Spirit divided to every man severally as he will. And when it comes to moving and all that, we're going to see again what we saw before already in the 13th chapter of Exodus, the cloud of God's presence led the way and the ark went.

So if everything is under the order of God, not self-will, you know there's no such thing in Christianity, in the body of Christ, for one to really say, I want to be this, I want to be that.

No. It is the Holy Spirit who appoints, who gifts and fits and orders our place and we're to [00:17:07] find out our use, what our place is.

Now the Lord even said in Mark 13, I think it is, he says, watch and pray and to every man his work.

So there's a work for each of us to do and when we function in this place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, there's beautiful order. Think of three and a half million people, we're going to see either this afternoon or today in a way, that some died.

And then I was thinking, if some died, there surely must have been some born too. There were families, life went on and there were those who were born in the wilderness journeys and those who passed on.

[00:18:02] But God was over all and there was that guidance.

So in the fourth chapter, their work is assigned.

The Levites, there was the Kohathites and the Morawites, some, and the Gershonites.

In the tabernacle, when the cloud would move, there was the signal and God gave that, he's the one that ordered that. Then they had to go and everybody had their work to do. And I think I've mentioned this before here, it's a little incident that sticks in my mind. Years ago, when our brethren at St. Louis had a little store building where they met and I came there one morning, on the Lord's day I was there, and the Sunday school hour [00:19:03] was first and there was numbers came and everybody, there was not a whole lot of people, but those who came earlier, they busied themselves.

And one sister says, we all have our work to do. And there was order here. One would dust this and place the books here and do this and so on, get the meeting hall ready for a meeting. I thought it was lovely. Each one did something and worked together. Well, that's what you get here. And when God is working, there is that wonderful order. To help one another, Joshua grew up under Moses.

And when Moses' time was up, Joshua was ready to take the lead.

And we have in scripture there, Elisha.

It says, he washed Elijah's hands, Elijah, the experienced prophet, and the young working [00:20:04] together with him and learning as it is in life, apprenticeship as it were. And so all that was ordered.

The fifth chapter speaks about leprosy, there could not be any uncleanness and instructions are given there as to that.

And we should say, but the Levites, it mentions in the fourth chapter, in the third verse, that the Levites were numbered and to serve from 30 years old to 50.

There was a time of preparation.

A youngster wasn't fitted to be a Levite.

Now, when we speak of age, spiritually, it's not physical years.

[00:21:04] But it shows there was some maturity needed.

And when he got to be 50 years old, he couldn't go forth in the act of service. But he ministered with his brethren in the tabernacle. So it comes the time, you know, naturally of life, when you cannot do what you used to do.

But there's a service of communion and prayer. And so that was regulated.

And so it says in the eighth chapter of Numbers, verse 25, that the Levites, they ceased their warfare of the service and ministered in the tabernacle to keep the charge. There's work for older folk to do, oversight.

There's work for younger ones. When you can run, I often refer to the football games.

For those who run with the ball, and they've got to be active and able, comes a time when [00:22:08] you can't run with the ball anymore, even in the things of the Lord. So there's the work of coaching and so on like that, work to be done. Now let's come to the ninth chapter, a very important point here. I just have to pass over many of these things, touching the high points. In the ninth chapter, we have something spoken in verse 16.

Well, verse 15 says, and the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, mainly the tent of testimony. This is what we get in the last chapter of Exodus. And in verse 16, it says, so it was always. The cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. Verse 17, when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that, the children [00:23:02] of Israel journeyed. And in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord, the children of Israel journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord, they pitched. As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle, many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the

tabernacle, according to the commandment of the Lord, they abode in their tents. And according to the commandment of the Lord, they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from evening until the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed. Whether it was by day or by night, that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days or a month or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not. [00:24:06] But when it was taken up, they journeyed. 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. I read all these verses because I think this is a very important point, to move by the guidance of the Lord.

Now, when we travel, it's good to sort of work out something according to your time and your purpose.

But there was no schedule for the movements of the children of Israel.

As I mean to say, they didn't know how long they were going to stay here or there or when they would move. As it says here, whether by night or by day.

[00:25:05] God had the schedule.

And as I said already, you'll find that he kept them there at Sinai 11 months.

Now they might have said, we've been here long enough, let's get going. I'm tired of this place, I'm going to move.

And so in the movements of the Lord's people, we should desire the Lord's guidance, where we should pitch our tent.

There comes a time sometimes when it's indicated we need to move. And as we made this experience, our family grew up and we didn't need a big house, needed a smaller house and so on.

I came across a verse, I think it's in Deuteronomy, the Lord went before them to search out a place for them to pitch their tents in. [00:26:01] Now that's pretty personal.

And we look to the Lord and he's shown us an unexpected place. And we've been happy there for a number of years. Well, time may come we have to make another move. Of course, we're all waiting for the move up. And we don't know when that is either. But how we should be dependent upon the Lord. He has the directions.

So as you read here, you see, when the cloud moved, the pillar of fire, whether it was by night or by day, they journeyed.

So in Psalm 32, the Lord says, I will guide thee with mine eye. And we have in the book of Acts, the movements of God's servant. And sometimes we read there in the book of Acts, they wanted to go a certain place, but Satan hindered.

[00:27:01] So we have to do with Satan as well, who seeks to break up God's plan. And the great thing

is, we often say, we shouldn't run ahead or lag behind. Now we're going to see, perhaps this afternoon, that when they got here to Cadiz, Barnia, the very border of the promised land, they didn't want to go on up.

Spies were sent to spy out the land, and they said, no, we don't want to go.

That happens.

But our movements are not to be according to our desires, but according to the Lord's will. So I think we have enough of that. Now in the 10th chapter, there were silver trumpets. They were to make trumpets of silver. Silver speaks of redemption. And the priests were to blow.

Verse 8, the sons of Aaron, the priests shall blow with the trumpets. [00:28:06] And you find here in verse 4, I have to go over this quickly, it said, if they blow with one trumpet, then the heads of the thousands of Israel would gather. Verse 1.

Then verse 5, if it was to be an alarm, the enemy is coming, then they, certain camps would blow. And when they blowed it a second time, it was an alarm for their journeys. And verse 7 is another occasion when the congregation is to be gathered together. He shall blow, not sound an alarm.

And they would come together for their, verse 10 says, the days of their gladness, their solemn days, the beginnings of the years, blow with the trumpets of the burnt offerings and so on.

And so a trumpet, you know, is something loud.

And for a vast camp like that, it had to be something that was heard. [00:29:03] But it was the priest that would see the first movement of the cloud, whether it was by day or night.

And they say, God is going to move us, we've got to move. And the trumpet would be blown. But you wouldn't blow an alarm if it was a false alarm, if the people all set up and the enemy is here. No, there were times when it was their glad days, their feast days. And so for us too, there are announcements of conferences, we're being invited here or there or we have one, and their glad days, days of our feasts. And we ought to respond. This is the Lord leading. So that's the subject there.

Now chapter 10, verse 11 through 12, they left the wilderness.

[00:30:05] Chapter 10 here now, verse 11, it came to pass in the 20th day of the second month and the second year that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

And it tells you how they moved. It was order and everybody grabbing their tent and running in here and see who can get first in line. No, none of that. It was all directed. Here it says, the sons of Morava, verse 14, in the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah. Now Judah means praise.

I well remember, I was quite a young fellow living in a city of Milwaukee, a brother from [00:31:02] Canada by the name of George Foggin came and he was exercised of the Lord to go as a missionary to China.

And he did. He married a daughter of one of our missionaries that we knew, Brother Rock, who worked in China.

And I met her years afterwards. I don't want to tell too much about George Foggin. But he spoke, and I'll never forget what he said.

He brought out how that Judah was to lead the way. When they were journeying, Judah went first. And Judah means praise. And he got a hold of that truth and he preached on it, he said, in an assembly when he was. Lead the way was singing, praising the Lord. And then he told about how came Monday morning and he was going to work and a brother met him and said, well, George, how are you? [00:32:02] Judah to the front?

And he said, he wasn't rejoicing in the Lord. Judah wasn't to the front. He made a really practical point of it and that's what it is. Lead the way with singing. Judah was first and then the others followed. And so we have in verse 33, 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 Ark went first. And this is brought in, I'm just passing it over, that Moses had asked his father-in-law to go along with him. He said, you're acquainted with this wilderness and you can be eyes for us. And Moses had a tendency to lean on some human help. But here it says, it was the Lord moved the cloud and he went before them. The Ark to search out a place.

[00:33:02] The Ark represents Christ. It was the most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle. And so they went on. Well, they moved on. Now chapter 11, and when the people complained, it displeased the Lord.

And the Lord heard it and his anger was kindled and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses. When Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched and he called the name of the place Taberah, because of the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

Here we hear that old, I was going to say song, but it's not the song, that we have been hearing with the children of Israel in their journeys along here. You remember what that was, grumbling.

[00:34:05] Grum, grum, grum, grum.

Four times we have mentioned in the book of Exodus there that they grumbled, they complained. And here, it's not the song of the Lord, but complaining.

And it displeased the Lord.

What have we got to complain about?

Some of you knew Brother G.A. Cashel.

Well I knew his uncle, a dear old brother, and whenever you asked him, how are you, and you know sometimes he looked like he could topple over. He was not a specimen of strength in his old age in a way. [00:35:01] And whenever you asked him, how are you, he would say, much to be thankful for.

That's one thing I'll remember about that dear old brother. And you know, I think I was there in New York City one time and he was in the hospital, placed in the hospital.

And the brethren knew in the little gathering that he was in the hospital. And lo and behold, the door opens and in comes Brother Shalinski, that was his name.

Well they thought he was in the hospital. Yes he was.

But it came Lord's Day morning and it was his practice to go to meeting. So if he's in a hospital or not, he was able to be up and around, and so he just gets dressed and goes off and he comes to the meeting. That was his life, praise the Lord, and much to be thankful for.

That's what Brother Cashel would tell himself. [00:36:04] How are you? Well his uncle would say, much to be thankful for.

And old Brother Cashel, he says, I didn't ask you that, I asked you how you are.

Well that was his answer. But so easily we complain and it displeased the Lord and the anger of the Lord was kindled. Now we remarked when we came to Sinai that up until that point, when they were on the ground of grace, God bore with all their complainings and their sinnings and he provided wonderful provisions.

But now when they put themselves on the ground of law at Sinai where we read three times they said, all that the Lord has said we will do. God took them at their word and he didn't deal with them in grace now, he dealt with them in justice and he sent a fire and it consumed the uttermost parts of the camp.

[00:37:02] Why the uttermost parts?

That's the back seats.

Now don't take offense if you're sitting in the back seat this morning, but you know there are those who habitually, habitually like to take the father's seat and get out the first before the preacher or somebody can talk with him and ask him. And so this suggests they were in the outermost, as far away as they could be from the center of the tabernacle and that's where they were, that's where the complainers were.

And Moses cried to the Lord and he prayed and the fire was stopped. Now we come into, in these chapters here, another phase of Moses' life. I mentioned previously there are seven spheres of Moses' life of 120 years.

[00:38:07] Quickly the first 40 years were spent in Egypt, he was a prince in Egypt. Second the next 40 years were spent in Midian where he was a shepherd. And then the last 40 years were spent in the service of the Lord and they're divided, we find he was the deliverer from bondage, he led them out of

the bondage of Egypt. And then he was the leader in the wilderness, he's the one that interceded with God and so on.

And then he was the lawgiver at Mount Sinai, he's spoken of as the mediator of this covenant of law, so he was the lawgiver, the fifth period. Now we come into a sixth phase of his life in trials and testings.

Moses had a hard time and we see here, I think it's on in this chapter, he says, it's too [00:39:05] much for me.

Wonderful man as he was, yet his strength was only in God.

So the next thing is now, what we find here, if we put it on the map, they came to Tabareth. Do I have that on here?

It's round over here where the manna was despised, we're getting this far in the journey. Now verse 4, the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting, and the children of Israel also wept again and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?

God was giving them the manna to eat every day, every morning, but they wanted flesh to eat.

And it's the mixed multitude that started. Now who were they?

[00:40:01] Well we didn't refer to it, but you'll find that when they left Egypt, a mixed multitude went along with them.

There were those who were not really trusting in the Lord, for the wilderness demands a walk of faith.

And it was this mixture of people that started the trouble.

Now verse 5, they said, we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic. How'd you like to make a meal of that kind of food? It's all right in some condiments and so on, some flavors, but they were thinking about Egypt's food.

That's a picture of the world.

We lust and hunger after some of the things in the world that we used to do, that are like cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions. [00:41:04] Somebody said when you eat that, everybody else knows what you ate. The smell of the world.

And there they were in Egypt going to the promised land, and they're thinking about the world, turning back.

And they said, now verse 6, now our soul is dried away, and there's nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes.

What a word.

Nothing but this manna. And you know, manna was called angels' food.

Food for angels.

Angels are strong.

And they were getting tired of the manna, despising the manna. But God says, it was as corander seed, colors, bdellium, and the people went about and gathered it, and they beat it in a mortar and baked it in pans and made cakes of it, and the taste [00:42:01] of it was like fresh oil. God never said anything in the 16th of Exodus about the manna, that they should bake it in pans and cakes and so on. This might suggest trying to dress up the Word of God, make it appealing to people. And we hear all kinds of sermons today, supposed to be based on the Word of God. I remember one old brother up north here at Irma, he told the story of a young preacher, and he said, I've got my sermon already, now I have to find a text for it. He had a sermon all made with his own talking, now he wanted to find a text in the Bible that we could tie onto it, and so on. Well, that might give the picture here, trying to dress up the manna, change the flavor, getting tired of it. There's nothing like the pure Word of God, beloved. By the grace of God, I've been privileged to study the Scriptures for over 60 years. [00:43:01] And I tell you, it was just as fresh and wonderful this morning as I read it, as it was when I first ever read it.

Nothing like the pure freshness of the Word of God, if our souls are right. But if we're tired of the manna, then we're in trouble. While my time is up here, this is a bad state of soul, when the manna is despised.

Then we're backslidden, and we need to get back and enjoy the freshness of the Word of God. I'll just close in prayer.

Our blessed God and our Father, we thank Thee for these lessons Thou hast recorded for our learning, the journeys of the children of Israel, Thy ways with them, Thy instructions as to order and all. And we pray Thee to make them good and practical to us in our lives, as we journey in the wilderness [00:44:05] way. Will Thou help us, and that we may not despise the manna. We may hunger after the precious Word of God as Thou didst give, and to enjoy Thy presence, and to be dependent upon Thy leading and guiding. So we commend each one to Thee, and ourselves for the rest of this day, and bring us back again to study more Thy Word. We ask it as we give Thee our thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus, amen. This meeting be four o'clock, Lord willing.