

Whose is the priesthood?

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Chapter 17, I want to take just a verse or two from 17 and possibly in 21.

But we begin with chapter 17, verse 3.

Number 17, verse 3.

And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Zeruiah. For one rod shall be to the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the cabinet of the congregation before the testimony where I will be with thee. And it shall come to pass that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom. And I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the people of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

Verse 8.

It came to pass that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness. And behold, the rod of Aaron to the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded alms.

[00:01:11] Now, chapter 19.

Chapter 18, sorry.

Chapter 18, verse 12.

Chapter 18, verse 12.

All the best of the oil, all the best of the wine, and of the wheat.

The firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee.

And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine.

Every one that is clean in thine house shall eat it.

This is chapter 19.

Pass over to chapter 20.

[00:02:03] Verse 8.

Take the rod, gather thou thy assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother.

Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth this water.

And thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock, so thou shalt give the congregation thy peace to drink.

Moses took the rod before the Lord, as he commanded. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock. And he said unto them, Here now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?

And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice. And the water came out abundantly.

Now chapter 21.

When Aaron, the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies, [00:03:06] then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.

And Israel bowed above, and the Lord said, If thou wilt indeed deliver those people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy those cities. And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them, and their cities. And they called the name of the place Hormath. And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to come as the land of Edom. And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God and against Moses.

Wherefore hath he brought us 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.

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people. [00:04:02] And much of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against him.

Pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed to all the people.

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

And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of grass, he lived. And the children of Israel set forth, and pitched in Oboth. And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ajahiel, in the wilderness which is before Boab, toward the sun rising.

I want you to turn over if you would for a verse in Joshua.

[00:05:05] Joshua chapter 4, verse 8.

And the children of Israel pitched so, as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests, which bear the ark of the covenant, stood. And they are there until this day.

Now, chapter 5, verse 10.

And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept a parcel on the fourteenth day of the month, and even in the place of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow, after the parcel, [00:06:04] unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the seventh, till the same day. And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.

Neither had they the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

I'm going to read to you an interlude on Israelite law, perhaps a typical book to find. A book of Amos, chapter 5, verse 25.

Amos 5, verse 25, where it says, Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have walled the tabernacle of your Moloch, and Chayim, your images, and Saul your God, which ye made to yourselves.

[00:07:07] Just perhaps for the sake of those who are joining our little company tonight, I'd like to say we have travelled together, God helping us, and I trust with profit, from Egypt, where we found ourselves ultimately, before we just left it, at what we call Whitsane Corner, and there we discovered God said, Stand and see my salvation. And he then took them, as you know, he made the way through the waters, all they had to do was to walk across it, because there were no obstacles left. Then finding ourselves on the right side of the Red Sea, we listened to the singing of the precious Christ the God, when he celebrated the victory, and the overcoming of the enemy.

We moved on, do you remember, to Marlow, where we learned something of the bitterness of those things which cut across the lusts of the flesh, and where we would learn how to say no.

[00:08:04] Moving on to England, we enjoyed something of the ministry that the Spirit of God gave in its refreshment. Then coming to the place where the rock was stricken, you may remember, we saw that Christ died in order to give us the Holy Spirit.

And then out comes Amalek, because there's one thing he does not want, and that is for the saints of God to make any spiritual progress. And as we were saying, if there's any movement at all towards this precious heavenly Christ, you will discover that the enemy is there at the same moment, in order to hinder any of this movement, God, or heavenly God, or Christ.

Well then, leaving Reckoning behind, we now find ourselves in the wilderness, and the question, I thought, of the priesthood ought just to be touched upon. We have this to remember, and there's a vast territory to cover.

[00:09:04] They took the children of Israel under the guidance of God, and the ways of God. Let us always remember that the wilderness is not the purpose of God. The wilderness were the ways of God.

In the ways of God, they took 40 years to get where we shall be, I hope, spiritually tonight. In reality, and in our affections, across the place which was the purpose of God to bring them into.

But here the priesthood comes before us, as you remember, or as I will show to you, I hope, in the verses that are before us.

The great question that is asked is this, in the previous chapter, who is this, the priesthood? I'd like to point out, beloved saints of God, that they began a rebellious people on his hands. I'm talking about Jehovah. He's got a rebellious company on his hands, and what's he to do about it? He can't go on with rebellion. He can't go on with sin. So what is he to do?

[00:10:01] And I'd like to point out to you that this is what he does. He shepherds in grace, and he brings in the priesthood. This is how he answers the murmuring to the people of Israel. This is how, beloved saints of God, he will answer any sense of murmuring in your heart and mine. There's a respiratory precious man in the glory, and he's a priest. He's a man, then.

He's a priest for all men, toward God. And blessed be his holy name, he's available to the saints of God today. But historically, as we say, or typically, we find here in Numbers that there's a question. Who is this, the priesthood? And God said, I'll show you tomorrow who the priesthood really is. And so he tells them, as you remember, to cut twelve rods. And on each rod, they write the name of a tribe. And the tribe of Levi is one of the names written on the rods. And the rods are laid out before the Lord and left there till the morning. And in the morning, they go in.

Moses goes in and discovers there is one rod that has budded. [00:11:01] I want you to particularly notice this. If I could make it clear to you, there were twelve rods weighing in all day. The Christ of God, you see, must die.

Death must come in.

And God is not going to allow the priesthood to pass over to any man in the flesh. Death has to come in.

Priesthood is to do with resurrection. Life in a new sphere.

And so the rod of air and bud.

Life comes out of it.

All the other eleven below it are dead. Dead rods.

But out of this one dead rod, with the name of Levi on it, there comes these three things. How do they, Scripture puts them?

In verse 9 of chapter 17, he came to pass on the moral.

Moses went into the tabernacle of witness. And behold, the rod of air for the house of Levi was budded, brought forth buds, bloomed blossoms, and yielded arms.

[00:12:02] It budded from its saints of God. This was the first indication that there is, that priesthood is on the line of resurrection. Life out of death, beloved saints of God. That's why our purest Jesus is in the glory tonight. One of the reasons is this. He's the great high priest. He's priest over God's house. And thanks be to God, we have him there in the glory, in the power of resurrection.

The rod budded. It produced life in the priesthood. That's what it means. The only kind that God could recognize. No priest of the other eleven tribes could be found. They're all dead.

But Aaron's was God's choice. This is what one would like to impress upon our hearts. This is God's choice. Our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory tonight, beloved saints of God. It's not your choice or mine. He's God's choice. God has put him there.

And I say he's there, a blessed man, representing man God will.

[00:13:01] That's the priesthood.

Not only was life indicated in notice, but it budded. It brought forth buds and it bloomed and blossomed. There were three stages there. A three-fold cord, you know, is not easily broken. Here are the three stages which indicates the activity and strength of the priesthood. And the fruits, if you will. Because you know as well as I, perhaps, that the almond tree is the very first to blossom out there in these. First to bear fruit.

Always the time of resurrection. And here we have the almond grove which had gone in as a dead grove. Now a living grove. Now producing that which is beautiful, so to speak, and also producing that which is fruit. A three-fold cord, we might rightly say, indeed.

So, we see that priesthood is founded upon death, but is attested in resurrection.

And this is God's choice, an attestation. He attests to the fact that the priesthood is confirmed to the house of Levi.

[00:14:05] That's in our chapter before us.

These three features that I've brought up are progressive, as we might say. It buds, you notice.

It blossoms.

And then the fruit is there.

You might think perhaps of almonds in connection with the budding.

And Colossians with regard to the blossoms.

And Ephesians with regard to the fruit.

In other words, Romans are the babes, Colossians are the young men, and Ephesians are the fathers. These three things go together.

And may be suggested by this. But nevertheless, what is here is very clear to your soul and mine. Out of death comes priesthood, but it is attested by resurrection. That's chapter 17.

So the flesh of the God of priesthood, you see, has entirely gone out of sight. [00:15:04] And God has brought in another man. And if I might say so, beloved saints of God, the whole point in our traveling through the wilderness is just this. That we learn there is such a thing as another man. And that we learn there is such a place as another place. We want to find another man. And we want to find this other place. And in order to this, God permitted or allowed or led his people through the wilderness. Ultimately, before they crossed Jordan, they learned about another man. And when they got over Jordan, of course, they went in another place altogether. This is one's purpose, beloved saints of God, in bringing these features before you. That's spiritually and in your affections too.

You may not only leave Egypt behind, but you would step out of the wilderness for a moment, so to speak, and cross over Jordan. And find what God has really in store for the people who take the trouble, one might say, to go this way. [00:16:02] I remind you, two and a half tribes stayed on the wrong side of Jordan. Nine and a half went into the land.

You remember? Two and a half stayed on the wrong side of Jordan.

The result was, when the enemy came, it says they were the first to be taken. So one doesn't want any soul here tonight to be among the two and a half left on the wrong side of Jordan.

Because it simply means Satan comes along and takes you off spiritually at least. Now what we want, of course, and one's objective is to see that every soul is across Jordan and enjoying the new features of the land that is there.

Well, we passed over, we passed over, we must pass over the chapter that concerns the red heifer, because that in itself is a study. But we're passing over now to chapter 18.

[00:17:05] And this is an important chapter that has very little consideration given to it, one has found in the past. But it's so vitally important because it brings out just how a priesthood flourishes and how it is sustained. I'm not going into all the chapters. I didn't stop even on it. I just want to draw your attention to some of the features. Would you look at verse 12? Verse 12 of Numbers 18. The best, the best of the oil, the best of the wine, the best of the wheat. The first fruit, which they shall offer unto the Lord. I want you to notice this particularly, the good things, these excellent things. The very best of the land that could be produced, they were to be offered unto the Lord. Would you notice this? They are going upwards. This is very important. They are going upwards. They're going upwards to the Lord. We will see one goes, because we often feel that all sustenance and blessing comes down from above.

That's perfectly true in a way, but that's only the initial stage. [00:18:02] What happens is this, there is that which goes up to the blessed God. And remarkably enough, as this goes up to God, or as this is offered up to God, the very best, on the way up, so to speak, is the very food that ministers to the priesthood.

I'd like you to see this, because what it really means is this. We imagine, say, a pyramid before you. The base of it, beloved, is the activities of the, what we might call ourselves, a common people. The activities of the saints of God. The spiritual activities, I mean. The wholehearted spiritual response to the divine demand, one might say, or the spiritual claims made upon the saints of God. Here is a wholehearted activity going on among the saints of God. Take it in a little, an assembly, for instance. There is the activities of the spirit of God, rousing the affections of the saints, [00:19:03] so that there is a current, so to speak, of thanksgiving and praise ascending to the blessed God. What's the result of this? Well, we see, don't we?

I go on to verse 13, just so as not to leave anything out. Whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord. You notice there, you and I are included here. Which they bring unto the Lord. You see this?

It's very important to notice this. The they and the thee.

Two distinct things. Whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine. It's going to belong to the peaceful.

You notice, what you, beloved saints of God, and what I, under the guidance of God, the Holy Spirit, offer to the blessed God by way of praise and thanksgivings. Spiritual offerings. These are the very things upon which the priesthood feeds. And that's why it's so very important that you and I, when we come together, to come along in the right spirit. Do you see what I mean? [00:20:01] I remember JBS writing once, he says, the morning meeting or the assembling meeting is not a dressing room. If you've got any undressing or dressing to do, well, I mean, spiritually, I mean, it needs to be done before you get here. So that when you are here, you are free to be guided by, or led by God, the Holy Spirit, producing the affections from your heart, which ascend upward.

And this is all to the spiritual benefit of the priesthood.

You may tell me, well, we're all priests. Well, I'm dealing here with the picture, the title, presented to us in numbers.

So, if the priesthood is to flourish, we might say, this is a feature we need to keep very clearly before us. Because often we feel, perhaps, that there's a spiritual lack. You know, beloved saints of God, if there is a spiritual lack in any assembly, it's because it's your fault and mine.

We are the trouble. [00:21:01] It's because we are low spiritually. We're not producing those features, God-willed, upon which these spirituals, the priesthood, can possibly feed.

We are the fundamental cause for weakness in assembly life, or assembly worship and praise.

It's only where there is this accumulation of affection for the precious Jesus, ascending to God, that will then sustain and feed the priesthood.

And so here we have, I read to you, I've just mentioned this, I read to you from Amos 5, a rather remarkable scripture, very often overlooked.

And the point of the scripture is this. They starved the priesthood. And they starved the priesthood,

beloved, because they didn't offer the sacrifices which had been laid down for them, to offer them to Jehovah.

We learn from Amos that while they were in the wilderness even, they had their own gods, they had their own tabernacles, [00:22:02] and they were offering to a false god. Imagine this. Amazing thing.

Is it any wonder that the priesthood is starved if the saints of God are concerned about their own things? Have an idolatry in the midst and so on. And this was the trouble for these people. Forty years, God said, did you offer to me? Forty years, did you offer to me? No. You offer to your own gods. False gods.

So no wonder, beloved, the priesthood gets starved today, in the days in which we live, if there is not that spiritual alertness and living moment among what I call the members, the common members.

Because we have three classes here. We have the common people, we have the Levites, and we have the priests.

And perhaps you, if I may say so, as you happen to be sitting on this occasion only, I'm not amongst you, I'm just standing here, you are the common people, I normally would be with you, but as I happen to be here, I'm probably what we might term a liquid, acting levitically, but then, apart from that, [00:23:03] we are all priests.

Thank God, when we come to the New Testament at least, there we learn of the priesthood. Living stones built in, means priesthood.

So all I'm trying to point out and leave with you is this, that the very basis of the flourishing of a priesthood is laid in the affections and activities, spiritual activities of the saints of God. And so you see, beloved saints of God, no word of murmuring could possibly come from our lips, because the wrath of the priesthood, typically I mean, would silence every murmuring thought.

So we'd better pass over pretty quickly, I think to chapter 21, oh no, chapter 20, sorry.

We must just look at this, if you wouldn't mind. The second time they cried to Jehovah, [00:24:02] the water, where the rock is introduced.

I just touched on it, I remember, a night or two ago. Striking the rock when they called for water in the book of Exodus was perfectly correct, because Christ, the victim, took the judgment, as you know, full well.

And out of the struck rock there came the living waters. We've seen that. Christ died in order that we might have the Spirit of God in this sense of refreshment and encouragement.

But now we come to the time when once again they murmur, and once again they say, we have no water. And the scripture, or the Jehovah, tells Moses exactly what to do.

He says, take your rock.

And he said, I want you to speak unto the rock, not strike the rock.

A brother said to me, I think it was last night, pointing out these verses to me, he said, it's very important that we should understand these verses. [00:25:02] And it is indeed very important.

You see, I believe I did suggest to you that the rock in Exodus is a word which means a low rock, a substance.

The Hebrew word for rock here means a high rock.

I'd like to know, beloved saints of God, how you and I could possibly imagine for a moment that the Christ of the glory could be struck. Of course not. The Christ down here died for you and me. You remember the great apostle saying, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Well, the rock was struck for you and for me and for the beloved saints of God, and to bring honor and glory, of course, to God the Father. But here, beloved, the rock ought not to be struck.

No spiritually minded person would ever dream of striking the rock twice. We might be perturbed, many people are perturbed about their sins and wondering what's going to happen. [00:26:01] They say we are converted, but we often find the old nature comes in and we do wrong things. What's to be done? Well, beloved, I can only tell you this, Jesus is not going to die anymore for sins. He's died once for sins.

And now he lives, he lives unto God. So Hebrews says there's no more sacrifice for sins.

It doesn't say there's no more forgiveness for sins, but what it does say is there's no more sacrifice for sins. Jesus has died once, and beloved saints of God, but give me an example.

This precious lamb of God which we saw was so big that it was too big for the household.

This precious lamb of God laid down his life, his blood was shed, so that you and I are sheltered before ever we left Egypt.

And so I'm just drawing your attention, that's all. To the verse in chapter 20, and see the great and grave mistake that cost Moses his entry into the good land of striking the rock when he was told to speak to the rock.

[00:27:03] There's a little, probably suggestion in this above it that might encourage your own thoughts. There's a man in the garden. He is the rock which is born of here. He's the high rock.

And the command is speak to him. Can't strike him, he's out of reach. Nobody will ever reach him again. He's left the sea altogether. He's died out of the sea, and he's up there in the door. But the command was speak to him, Moses. Do you think, beloved saints of God, that there's not also in this a word for your affections and mine? How many of you know about this precious Christ in the glory? Do you ever speak to him?

Do you ever speak to the man in the glory? Do you ever, from your heart, say, oh, how precious, Jesus.

It fills your heart.

It fills God's heart.

Speak to this man.

Marvellous sickness. Marvellous privilege, beloved, for you and for me to have access to the place where he is and address all notes of thanksgiving [00:28:02] and praise and worship to him.

And I suppose through him to the Father. I never could understand the people who thought that a child could always run to his father every time he wanted something and say, oh, Daddy, give me this. Daddy, give me that. Daddy, give me the other. And yet, as one listens to the prayers of the saints of God, it just seems this. It's always, Father, give me this. God, give us this. Lord, give us this. Always give, give, give, give. Beloved saints of God, this precious Jesus dying to get your affections, to hold your heart. He wants your heart.

Let us think more on these lines, perhaps. Well, we come now, we must come, because of the time, to a very vital symbol or, what do you call it, a type in the wilderness.

I remember JVS wrote, I read it some years ago, [00:29:01] an article called Salvation.

And I remember he said in there, you know, he says, we think of many types in the wilderness, but there's one type we are prone to overlook, and that's the brazen serpent.

But beloved saints of God, if you and I have been to the brazen serpent and come out from there, we can call that day a red-letter day in our spiritual history.

It will make all the difference to your outlook, beloved saints of God, when you get here in the wilderness. And that's why God puts it there. He puts it there at the end of the wilderness journey, but he puts it there, beloved, because what he's saying to your heart and to mine is this, there's only one kind of man going over Jordan, not two kinds, there's only one kind.

And the other kind must die, must be finished with, must be terminated.

But there's one man, the new man, he's going over Jordan. He's going to enjoy the new land, eat the new food, follow the new leader, be under the priesthood of the new priest.

[00:30:01] Only one kind of man, beloved. That's what I meant at the beginning. We learn here to change our man. And then we learn that the place is changed too for the new man.

Because we've got a new man, he must have a new sphere for his activities.

And so this is a whole purport, if I may so say, of the wilderness journey, that your affections and mine should cross over Jordan in the clear knowledge it's the new man that's gone over, and the old man has been dealt with by God. That which is offensive to God has been put out of his sight. O beloved saints of God, if your heart and mine could only lay hold of this, that this old man of ours has been put out of sight, that which was so offensive to God, God has brought an end to him.

He's given you a new one.

And in order that you might be in the right environment, as people say, he takes you over Jordan into a new sphere altogether.

Beloved, until you cross Jordan, you'll never understand truly the headship of Christ. You won't understand even the priesthood of Christ. [00:31:02] You won't understand what is vital, which is God's eternal purpose. That you should understand that you are united to Christ.

You can never understand this in the wilderness. You've got to get over.

You've got to feed on what God has provided. You've got to understand that the man which is offensive to God has been brought to an end. And he's brought in a man who appreciates the new man and the new things.

And he'll therefore take you over into a new sphere where all these things are for your enjoyment. Isn't it a marvellous thing?

Well, let us consider just for a moment, because it is really vital in our Christian history to see that the offensive man, that which offended God, God didn't forgive, so to speak.

He fixed it.

There's one feature that I don't want everybody here has noticed. It never says that God forgives sin.

It says he forgives sins.

What God does with sin, that's the nature, [00:32:02] that's the tree, if you like, that produces the fruit. What God has done with this is don't bring it to an end. It's just.

He doesn't forgive him. He forgives the fruit. But the tree itself, it's brought to an end. And where is it brought to an end? Well, I've been saying to God, you've only got to cast your eye to the central cross on Calvary's hill. And you'll see where God's judgment fell. And you'll see where that responsible man was brought, finally, to an end, because he was offensive to God.

This is liberty, really.

Once you get to the enjoyment of this beloved, your heart, your spirit is set free. I remember many years ago, it must be now, because I'm getting on fairly towards the 80s anyway.

And I remember when I asked about a lad of about 14 and a half, 15, I think, I asked the brethren in Norwich whether I could break bread. Didn't know much about it, of course. I'll tell you the question they put to me. Are you enjoying liberty?

[00:33:01] I wonder, beloved saints of God, whether you put to candidates married to all men, those who ask with fealty, do you put such a question to them? Do you enjoy liberty?

Do you know, beloved, you can never worship God until you've come into liberty? Of course you can't. You're traveling with the old man. You've got to get rid of him. You can't take him into the Holy of Holies. You can't take any vestige of sin into the Holy Presence of God. You can't take a stain in

there. All that can go in there must be on himself. And you enter into liberty. Well, I thought years afterward, that was a very good question to put to a young man, wasn't it? Do you enjoy liberty? They must have known, beloved, that if I went in not enjoying liberty, I'm not saying I did, but if I went in not enjoying liberty, I'd be a break on the spiritual activities and particularly the worship of the ascended. And who wants to be a hindrance? We're either, one or the other, beloved, we're either a hindrance or we're a help. [00:34:03] Well, there it is, guys.

I must say, one reads over and over this last line in verse 5 and more, where it says, O soul, O soul, loathe this light of great.

Just think of the Lord.

The best food that heaven could provide him. The very best food that heaven had.

God fed his people upon it.

They got tired of it.

Do we get tired of it? We wouldn't admit it, would we? I'll tell you how we indicate we get tired of it. We turn to this and that in the world and indicate that Christ is in the nothingness. We want something else.

No matter what it is. It's the old man, of course. He's craving after something. And we have to wait.

Well, here we are. They loathe.

And I'll get as far as that, I'm sure. They loathe the light of great.

They loathe angels' food.

They loathe the best food in heaven. [00:35:01] It's incredible, isn't it? There it is.

This is where we find them. And it says, God heard and he sent fiery serpents among the people. They bit the people.

And much of the people died.

That which speaks so clearly of the entrance of sin into the world.

The serpent, I mean.

The fiery serpents. God goes right back to beginnings, so to speak. To fundamental things.

And he sends this fiery serpent. The serpent, the root of all the trouble. He sends it among the people and their business. And then for the first time possibly in 39 years, they are really repentant. And they turn and they say, we have sinned. God's hand upon them and truly taught them that at last they overstepped the mark, so to speak. And they had to confess.

And they did confess. We have sinned. It was genuine. I feel somehow or other this confession of theirs was a genuine confession.

They had got down to rock bottom, so to speak. [00:36:03] Do you know, beloved, it's amazing how low the human heart can go, isn't it? It's amazing what cesspool qualities is the human nature.

Do you know, beloved, say to God, it was not Satan. It was not an angel that spat in the face of Jesus. Do you know it was a man? Do you know it was a human? No one else would have dared to have spat in the face of the precious Christ of God. Only man.

See how low man could get.

They know this by the bread. We have sinned, verse 7.

And the Lord said unto Moses, he heard the cry of the right. This is amazing to me. It must amaze you at times. Bow your heart before this blessed God in worship and praise.

He didn't come out in anger. He didn't destroy them and say they had every right to do.

This is amazing. He answered their prayer, [00:37:02] but not in the way they expected.

They asked, call the fiery serpents off.

God didn't.

As a matter of fact, you know, you can't really. Not yet.

The day will come. Because the Lord said to the disciples, you remember, I see Satan falling from heaven as lightning falls. The day will come, beloved, when you'll be right out of the way. But it's not God's purpose, it's not God's ways here to bring this about. But what he does is bring in something else. You see, beloved, at least I hope you see the vital importance of understanding this time.

I don't pretend that I can explain it to you, but I feel the Spirit of God can take the word of God and show you that God brings this abominable, wretched man to an end.

And your heart goes up to him in praise and thanksgiving. You sigh out or cry out a hallelujah to God, because that man, which we know is offensive to God, and every time it raises its ugly head, it does something against God. [00:38:01] Thank God he brought it to an end at the cross.

You see this, beloved. This will bring you into a liberty you've never, never known before in your life, when you can see you can get rid of that man. He's gone.

In the sight of God, he's gone. All praise his holy name, he's gone.

This is the teaching of the time.

There's a new man, you see, had to go with John.

This is where the old man comes to his end. You remember this is where John's gospel starts. The son of man lifted up, as Moses in the wilderness was. Lifted up by God for man's blessing.

Here's the servant lifted up, bringing to an end the responsible man. Bringing to its lessons a new coming.

Who would enter all of Jordan into a new country.

Isn't it marvelous?

Who else would have thought of meeting a contingency like this [00:39:01] in this simple way?

Yet profound, divine way of bringing to an end a man that was a nuisance.

And bringing in a man that was a pleasure to God. A man who would be fit to cross Jordan and enjoy.

Be able to enjoy, be capacitated to enjoy the things that God had for them in reserve once they got over into the new land.

I've tarried on this a minute or two because I feel somehow or other this is a vital step in the wilderness journey.

Because as I said before, one's whole desire is that your soul and mind might really and truly know what it is to get over Jordan. What it is to enter into the purpose of God. Moses had it. We saw it in the 15th of Exodus. He celebrated a victory and he looked forward to the purpose, the conclusion, I mean, to the purpose of God.

Miriam, she failed in this we saw.

[00:40:01] And just here we read that she died with Aaron her brother.

They died in the wilderness.

That kind of priesthood even could not take the people of God over Jordan.

You see, it's important to see this. When you're over Jordan, do you know where you are, beloved? It isn't heaven. I mean, it's not when you die. A lot of people say you cross Jordan when you die. Well, one leaves that thought to them if it brings them comfort. On the other side of Jordan they say it's heaven. Well, that's good enough. That's very good indeed. But beloved saints of God, what is in the mind of God is that these people who have walked through the wilderness 40 years, at least a lot of them, the children of the diseased ones, that they should enter into the new land, there in heaven.

You don't need to postpone heaven and heavenly things, beloved saints of God. Do you know this well enough? Directly you're over Jordan, you're in a new sphere. You're breathing a new atmosphere. You're breathing the atmosphere of heaven. [00:41:03] Resurrection might be seen there, or might be resurrection if you will. It's seen there.

But it's never seen in your life and mine, beloved, until we've passed the brazen circle.

If we've passed it, it means, beloved, we've looked. We've looked and looked. We've looked to the extinction of the man which is offensive to God, and we've looked to the blessing of entering into the good of a new life which has a new sphere of development over Jordan.

So, you might say, they journeyed, verse 11, they journeyed toward the wilderness, toward the sunrise.

I want you to just notice there as we pass over, they are now fit to turn their faces [00:42:01] to the morning. It's evening. For the public, beloved, you know what the morning is? The rising of the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings.

But for you and for me, for you, beloved, for ourselves, the morning, the dawning of the morning, crimson's red across the sky, Jesus is coming.

That's our AM, so to speak. That's our morning, meeting him up there in the clouds.

When they turn their face, beloved, these earthly people, they turn their faces to the sunrise, they can now go straight forward across Jordan. What a marvellous position. After 49 years, beloved, after 40 years of learning, it took them all that time to teach their mothers and their hearts, God said in effect, now you're now fit to go over and enjoy the fruits of the good man. And as I say again, beloved, don't forgive me. This has been one's object altogether in these little series of meetings [00:43:02] that your soul and mine might travel through here, ultimately coming to this grand position that we're over Jordan.

We're enjoying a heavenly Christ and the things that God has reserved for his people who have bypassed, or passed rather, I ought to say, the rising sun.

Now, I think we ought to just turn over because there's one thing I didn't touch upon this, and I suppose I ought to have done, and that is the thing that comes out in the first two verses, first three verses of the chapter for the incident of the rising sun.

It's really quite interesting and important to see this, that is, the Canaanites descend and they would stop the people, children of Israel from entering into their possessions. Now, why I've harked back to this is simply for this reason. If there is one thing that hinders [00:44:01] the souls of the saints of God from crossing over Jordan, it's the Canaanite.

If you know what the Canaanite is, he speaks of the activities of the man who wants to get on in this life. He speaks of the man who is urgent in business, urgent in anything.

He wants to get on. Social climber, if you will. For there's nothing, beloved, more likely to hinder your soul advancing past the brazen serpent than having been overcome by the Canaanite.

But let us also take the word of Jordan that comes out in the very next verse, and that is when they were on the crest of the way, because God gave them the power to overcome the Canaanites. But when they were on the crest of the way, that's the most dangerous part, beloved, as you know it, in your Christian path. It's not when you're down there so much that the danger is, but it's when you

think you're up there. That's when the danger comes. [00:45:01] And these people, they were victorious. They'd overcome the Canaanite. They began to think something of themselves. And then alas, alas, we discover that they had not yet learned that that man was offensive to God and he's got to be put out of sight.

And God does that effectively at the brazen serpent.

Now, just finally, I just turn you over to Joshua.

Not as anything new, never in my mind to introduce anything new to you beloved saints of God, but to bring to your attention the word of God. The Spirit of God is the only teacher. He is the superlative teacher. And he'll take on these things, I doubt not, and build them into all affections if we give him a chance.

You and I know the enemy is waiting. Amulek is on the alert.

And before you're out of that door tonight, he'll be into your heart, trying to take out anything that the Spirit of God has sold him. You watch him.

He's a vigilant enemy.

And he knows exactly, if you have any desire, [00:46:02] Christ will. He's ready to pass. So let him be watchful.

So then turning over to Joshua 5, just the story.

I'm not going to repeat it, because you know it.

They cross over Jordan.

Christ's death, as we know in resurrection, our death with Christ.

The Red Sea we saw was the death of Jesus for us.

And the crossing of the Red Sea, of course, is our death with him. What I was concerned about was the language which the stones speak to all affections if we have an ear to listen to them. Jehovah says to the leader, Joshua now, Moses is gone, you see.

The old system is finished with. It's important to see that, isn't it? Everything is closed down. The priesthood is gone. The leader is gone.

Everything is new. A new leader is waiting. God says to Joshua, take [00:47:01] twelve stones out. I love this. Take twelve stones out to the bottom of the Jordan. Why twelve?

There are two and a half staying there. They can walk across.

However you and I may act, God never has less than the whole before him.

Take the twelve loads of shouldering. Never less than twelve. Take the twelve stones here. Never less than twelve.

Not nine and a half stones. Take out twelve, says Jehovah to Joshua.

And he got one man from each tribe to put a stone on his shoulder and we read that they came out of Jordan. And this is what it says about them. They carried them over with them unto the place where they lost and laid them down there.

They laid the stones down. That is to say, they secured the place for the one who had been into death. God's, Jehovah's command.

Take the twelve out.

That will be a testament when your children ask [00:48:01] about them. Take them out. You'll be able to tell them how God brought you over the Jordan. When he was at the fall, says it to me, brought you safely over Jordan and established you in this land.

What a tale to tell your children about. I sometimes think perhaps as modern parents, we fail to tell our children this kind of story. As a result, we lose them. It's finished you behind me. He took twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan and they placed them where they lost and they laid them down there.

But that wasn't the finish. In verse 9, something extraordinary happens. It says Joshua set up twelve stones in Jordan.

Why? Where's God's command to set up twelve stones in Jordan?

God never told Joshua to put twelve stones in Jordan. What he told [00:49:01] Joshua was, take twelve stones out of Jordan. Resurrection was to be the testimony, you see. The stones were to testify to the resurrection.

You remember what it says in Acts 10. He was shown openly in resurrection, says the preacher in Acts 10.

Here it is, shown openly in the new land, these twelve stones, telling without question whatsoever that they had come out of death and therefore this is resurrection.

But, I say again, Joshua gave the command put twelve back. Why?

Well, I think he had a spiritual acumen to understand that if there's resurrection there must be death.

And so spiritually he put his stones in Jordan.

That is, he recognized [00:50:01] that this was the very basis the death of suggested by the ark of course, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we with him indeed, crossing over Jordan, he says, what I'll do I'll treasure in my heart the precious truth that Jesus died. You put your stones in Jordan the lowest saints of God, it's a grand thing when you have this spiritual intuition to respond to the

resurrection side and appreciate the fact that the precious Jesus who rose from the dead and was shown openly in Acts 6 once died.

Always treasure this in your soul. Doesn't Darby write a hymn about it or a line about it? Walking by his side, I don't suppose that ever in eternity will it be forgotten that the precious Jesus died in order that he might secure all presence with him in the glory. And then finally we find in verse 12 of chapter 5 the manna ceased [00:51:01] on the morrow after they had eaten all the corn of the land.

Neither had the children of Israel manna anymore. They did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. You see beloved, all that is in the mind and heart of the blessed God, all the thoughts of God have come to fruition.

And they come to fruition beloved in the resurrected Christ. The man who had been through death is now alive again.

Here beloved is the fruition of all God's ways and blessings. Now they come into the scene where they can enjoy these things. Hitherto they found there was nothing in the wilderness whatsoever except what came from heaven. The manna and the water and the quails even, you remember, they were all gifts from above. There was no sustenance in the wilderness how much we have pressed this these last few nights. It's a grand blessing to take home to our hearts. There's nothing around us beloved saints of God who can feed this man. The only man who can cross over Jordan [00:52:01] to enjoy divine and heavenly things. And when you get over there beloved in the company of Jesus, you see this, you're raised together with Christ. When you get over there in the company of Jesus, what do you find? Not only do you find that all God's thoughts have come to fruition in this blessed man but you discover he has something there in reserve you never dreamed of. I think it's somewhere in Romans it speaks of the mind of man not ever understanding what God has.

Never enters into the hearts of man says the apostle.

Things that God has prepared for those who love him. Then many a person stops there. We must stop there beloved. We cross over to Jordan.

We discover that if the mind of man can't grasp it, you and I are guided by the spirit, we can grasp it. And God's intention is that we should grasp it. That we should grow up into this fruition, this fruit condition, this effusion condition, this father condition if you will. And be able to appreciate what God has done in Christ and what [00:53:01] as a result of which he is able to feed his soul.

And that is, if you notice, the manner so suitable for the wilderness. Now let me be very careful here. You and I are walking in the wilderness at the same time we enjoy the benefits of the land. Those people couldn't.

They were either in the wilderness or they were in the land. But may I put this to you beloved saints of God. If you want to go back in the wilderness, say to preach the gospel, you need to go from this side of Jordan if you're going to be effective for God. Until you've crossed Jordan I say, you're not conscious that you are living the hint with the expression of Jesus. You know nothing about union. You can't enjoy the headship of Jesus. But I say again, you and I can be in the wilderness in our Christian pathway, we can't get out of it, but at the same time we can enjoy all that the good land stands for. And may I once again say that if you're going back into the world so to speak to take the

message of the gospel you need to travel back over Jordan to give some indication that you've been there. I never [00:54:01] can understand how people can go out and tell about this precious Christ and glory and that sort of thing unless they themselves have been there and tasted it. And the whole point is whether you and I know this man, know him where he is either.

I don't know how else to put it, beloved, but he's not here. This is a lesson of the Lord. Jesus, beloved, is not here. He is in the glory. And if you and I are to have anything to do with him we must have to do with him where he is. And the only way you and I can have to do with him where he is is by the Holy Spirit.

There's access to the Father. Do you notice that? I was struck by this a few months ago. Not accessing to heaven, not accessing to the Holy of Holies, which is a spiritual idea, but access to a person. We have access to a person. We have access to the Father. You see that? And that's by the Spirit.

And so when we get over Jordan, in conclusion may I say, one of the [00:55:01] sweetest things that God has for your soul's enjoyment is what he cares to term the old garden of the land. Or the reserved garden. That which is always there, up there we might say, in the garden. This precious, once dead, but now risen and exalted Jesus. The impeccable Jesus. The man who adorns the throne of the Father. God will feed your soul upon him. And give you the sensibilities that you are united to him. There is union between him and you by the Spirit. And this is what God longs for. This is what God has been laboring for. This is why God is passing you through the wilderness season. In order that you might come to this grand conclusion, so to speak.

That you are indeed one with Christ. And that he is the head of the body.