

## Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

In our last segment, we talked about blood being the life of all those things God created to utilize it. This, of course, includes humans. Thus, the Bible makes it clear in Genesis chapter 9 verse 4 that we should not consume blood. This includes not just the direct consumption of blood by drinking it, but also the eating of it by not draining out the blood from animals we slaughter for consumption. Because it's impossible to drain all the blood from an animal at the time of slaughter, we should also see it as necessary to cook our meat until the “juices” run clear, in order to get all the blood out we can. This is not just a commandment in the Word because God wants us to get a point, but it's also a serious health issue. This is proven in modern times as we see slaughter and meat handling techniques getting sloppy and leading to serious life threatening infections, especially if the end consumer does not cook it thoroughly.

God, for the first time, gives man permission to use animal flesh as a food

source, but this doesn't come without a price. We talked in an earlier segment about the fact the animals would have fear of humans due to God's allowance of this. We also talked about the fact God did not repeat the instructions to Noah that He gave to Adam and Eve about subduing the planet and having dominion. All this has to do with the fact man had proven he could not be allowed to have dominion over everything or he would destroy it all. Instead, what God promises is that as long as the earth remains it would continue to be inhabitable. If God gave the power to subdue the planet into man's hands, this promise would not be possible to keep without violating man's free will. God will still allow man to destroy much of his world as he continues to walk in sin, but God will not allow man to make it uninhabitable. Thus, God simply does not give the command to subdue and have dominion in the post-flood world.

All these facts take us down to what is being said in chapter 9 verses 5 & 6. Man



had taken a step down from where he was in dominance over the animal kingdom and the planet in general. As I pointed out in an earlier issue, there is a big difference between man subduing the planet and having dominion over the animals - which is a caretaker role - to a world where the animals are delivered into man's hand! One of the differences which comes in all this is that man's physical form was, in many ways, now part of the eat and be eaten rules of nature. However, God makes it clear here in verses 5 & 6, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require;.." The "I" in the statement is God, and "require" means someone will have to answer for it. Man can shed the blood of animals and use them for food, but God will "require" the blood of humans, to be answered for.

Animal death is simply part of the nature of things. All we are asked to do in regard to animals is respect the life God created by not eating the blood. It's amazing what a direct contradiction many cultural beliefs are to this. They teach drinking part of the blood is respecting the animal's life. In many cultures people have, and in some cultures hunters still do carry with them, a ceremonial cup of some kind in which they will collect a portion of blood from the animal they have killed. This blood is, many times, not just drank by the hunter who made the kill, but by every member of the hunting party. This drinking of blood ceremony is in direct opposition to God's commandment about not consuming blood, and it comes about because people do not believe the point

God is making in the very next verse. Man's life is not on the same level as animals. While his physical existence in the here and now was becoming more apparently temporal through the event of the flood, the importance of man's existence still stands above the animals in this world, and all the life in this universe. When man takes the life of an animal for the purpose of eating it, he is not adding the animal's life force to his own, or any other number of beliefs which cause man to do these rituals. Man is simply reaching out and taking the nourishment his body needs from yet another category of nature.

When people do blood drinking ceremonies, they believe they are showing respect for what they consider an equal life being given so they can continue their lives by eating the animal. If this was true, it would indicate that human life is just part of the great circle of life, and could also be killed as long as the life force is respected. This is clearly not the case! Physical human existence is something God did not snuff out because of sin, but allowed man to live out his natural existence before facing death. The flood shows us that even though man got so corrupt there was only one man left on the planet who continued to believe God, God still did not bring human's physical existence to an end. If God handles man this way, human life on this planet is certainly not intended to be cut short by the actions of any other entity. I say "entity" because in verse 5 God does not just talk about killing by the hand of man, but also by the hand of beasts.

God uses the word “hand” not because an animal has to specifically have a hand to be considered responsible. Hands are simply something humans understand as the basis for taking action. Especially, intentional actions. If we build something, we take tool in hand. When starting a relationship, greeting someone after an absence, and even after a conversation, many cultures shake hands or the like. We talk about, “taking matters into our own hands.” It's the way we interact with the world. The word “hand” is a reference to the fact it's an individual's actions and choices. It's one thing for us to take actions in our lives and end up with injures which result in an untimely death of our bodies. It's one thing for us to defend ourselves and/or our property and in that action end up taking the life of another. However, this verse makes it clear, it's not in God's plan for any earthly entity to intentionally take actions which cause a human to die. This also includes actions on our own part against ourselves!

Now, animals make instinctive choices, and God had now put the fear of man in animals. This is the basis for animal aggression towards humans. When animals feel trapped they often lash out in fear. Humans should be aware of this fact when hunting and caring for animals. The commandment of God is that animals are given into man's hand. We can keep them, care for them, hunt them in the wild, and we do not have to answer for killing them, but the opposite is not true. God may have put the fear of humans in animals, but not

the instinct to take human life. God will require the blood of any animal which lashes out and kills a human. This means humans definitely have the right to put down any animal which does such a thing.

In spite of what man's thinking may come to believe, God wanted us to understand the post-flood world is not a kill and be killed, every man for himself world. God will require the blood of any human who intentionally takes another human's life. God makes it clear in verse 5, He will require the taking of human life by animals and by man in general, but then He goes on to add one specific stipulation. He says, “...at the hand of every man's brother...” He will require the life of man. Why would God specifically point out that a brother would answer to Him? Some would interpret this as being the commandment that a brother should be the one to avenge his sibling's death, but I believe what we are seeing here is more of a list. God wanted to specifically point out that even if brother rises against brother, there will be consequences. The first reason for this is that it would typically be the closest male relative of the person killed who would act as the avenger of blood. If a brother kills his sibling, the typical avenger of blood would be the same person as the killer. In many cases it may be just too hard for a parent or close relative to avenge the blood of one family member by killing another so closely related. God wanted it to be clear that even in these circumstances, God Himself will still require the blood.

Another reason God makes this specifically clear goes back to two previous events. The first is that Cain killed his brother Abel. (Gen. 4:1-16) As far as we know from the Word of God, this was the first time a human ever died. When God is speaking to Cain, the concern Cain had is that anyone who found him would have the right to slay him. How did Cain even have such a thought in his head? The answer is, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was not just an object lesson. It actually gave the knowledge of good and evil. Just as Adam and Eve knew from the moment they took of the fruit they were naked and that was a problem, Cain, in at least a general way, understood what God is explaining in the verses here in chapter 9. What ultimately happened in the case of Cain was not that God did not require Cain to answer for the life of Abel, but that he did answer to God. God Himself laid down the ruling.

God put a mark on Cain; and if anyone killed him, God would see that as a murder, not as the rightful vengeance of blood for the murder of Abel. (Gen. 4:15) Some may not see this as fair, but that simply doesn't matter. We can't judge God, only He can judge us; and the fact He chooses to show mercy in certain situations is simply something we may not understand. Instead of worrying about this, we should be grateful for God's mercy because we all need mercy from time to time! (Mark 11:25-26) The simple point is that God says here in chapter 9 He will "require," and He was the one who judged Cain. However, the fact people just don't see it

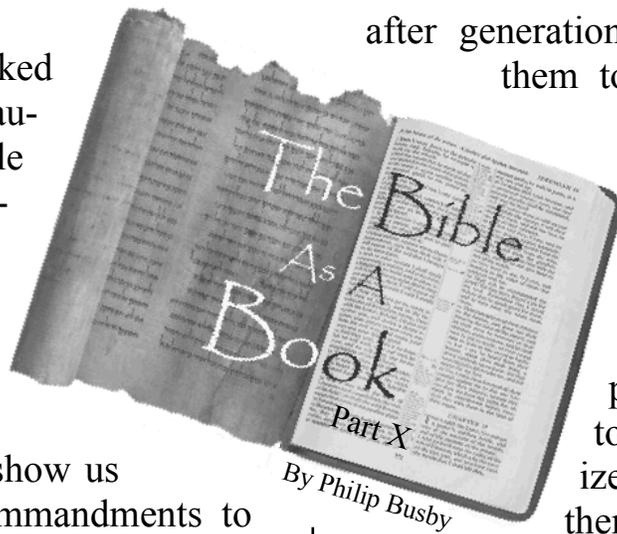
that way, brings us to our second story. Also in Genesis chapter 4 we are told a descendant of Cain, named Lamech, went out and killed a man. This he seems to claim was in self-defense, which would change things if true; but in any case, he does not seek God's judgment in the matter. Lamech simply comes home to his wives and declares his own determination. He determines if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then he should be avenged seventy and sevenfold. Instead of seeing that God is the one Who will judge such a matter, and that is what God did with Cain, man looked at Cain's story as a precedence for making the judgment on his own. When God comes to the post-flood moment where He is laying down the simple laws of the world to Noah and his family which will guide the human race into the future, God takes the time to specifically point out that what He determined with Cain is not a general exception to the rule. Brothers do not have the right to take the life of their siblings and escape the judgment of death for it.

Moving to verse 6, God makes the statement, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed:.." God saves His direct interaction for specific moments. Not because this is what He desires, but because it's not the will of man to call on the name of the Lord. Adam and Eve hid in the garden, Cain went out from the presence of God, and only eight people heeded the call to board the ark or die. God interacts with man at the request of man, and when or in those ways it

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Last time, we talked about the fact there are authority issues in the Bible itself. Simply put, the Bible is organized by the fact there are higher vastly encompassing commandments which the rest of the Word is hanging on in order to show us how to apply those commandments to our everyday lives. This brought us down to a discussion about the fact what many call the Old Testament should really be called the Hebrew Bible. This is because it was/is the Jewish culture and perspective which it was given to create and show. Now, we have already talked in this study about why God gave His Word to a specific people, and we want to keep this forefront in our minds. In order to understand how the Bible is rightly divided, we must be clear about the fact that all the Word was laid in this framework so there would be a clear way to understand it, no matter where you come from.

The benefit of giving the Word to a specific people is seen in so many of the stories man has told over the centuries. Especially, in a day and age of professional archeology, people love stories about far off quests where the main point is to collect hidden pieces of treasure from all over the world, which, once assembled, will do something incredible or bring knowledge of something incredible. While these stories make for good entertainment, they would be terrible reality! It's sad enough that man has, because of sin, lost the immortality the Tree of Life could bring, which means generation



after generation takes knowledge with them to the grave which later generations may never find, or have to spend great resources to find again. However, the idea of specifically hiding great knowledge on purpose or making it hard to find is just cruel. I realize in many of the stories there is the point that the knowledge was hid because it could be dangerous in the wrong hands; but if that was so true, why not destroy the information, or attempt to leave it with the right people, if you dare judge? Hiding it all over the world does not guarantee the right people will discover it any more than attempting to leave it with good people in the first place. In fact, the adventure of many of these stories is that the good is often in a race against the bad in order to find it and keep the information safe from evil.

The idea that great knowledge can fall into the wrong hands is certainly true when it comes to man's ideas and technology. This is why nuclear energy may be revered by many as the savior of man, but even putting aside the imminent danger nuclear power plants pose to the world, and the fact this technology may actually be keeping us from developing a true clean energy, let us not forget the foremost reason nuclear power was discovered! Everyday, we, and by we I mean the entire world, live under the threat of nuclear weapons technology or capacity being gained by the "wrong" people. How's that for a story of adventure?

Maybe ironically, but not amazingly, this leads us right into the point of this discussion. No one in our modern time is more under the threat of having a nuclear bomb used against them than the state of Israel. This is because the greatest knowledge man can gain has actually been given to them. The greatest knowledge man can gain is not dangerous; therefore, there is no concern it will fall into the wrong hands. The only danger is that it will be in no hands. This is what evil has been working to accomplish, but it's also part of why God gave His Word to a specific people as their identity and heritage. The concern of evil men has always been that God's Word will fall into any hands at all! It has always scared the devil, and the most evil men to ever walk this planet, that the knowledge of God will not only be out there in people's minds, but that people might actually start valuing it! This is why it was suggested to a king of the Meads and Persians' empire that he should make a law that the only person anyone could pray to would be him. The king made this law in his arrogance without considering that the wisest man he knew was a Jew who had become and remained wise because he prayed to The One True God three times a day! (Dan 6)

This is also why Jerusalem, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, had to be rebuilt by Jews who kept one hand on their sword while they laid stone for its walls, in spite of the fact their rebuilding was by order of the great king in Babylon. (Neh. 4) It's also why a man named Hitler got the cooperation of many people to literally build an infrastructure of railways, camps, and death chambers whose primary purpose was to kill Jews. It's why there is a "middle east conflict," to this

very day! The fact the greatest truth man will ever know is feared for what it will accomplish, not what it will destroy, is why an organization of men calling itself the church tried for centuries to keep the Bible under lock and key. It's why governments, the world over, have attempted to eradicate copies of the Bible, by confiscation and incineration. Why would there ever be any hope that man would find great truth and do something wonderful with it if it was hidden and difficult to find? Jews, Jewish lifestyle, and the Bible itself have been villainized, vandalized, and terrorized everywhere in the world. The Bible, just because it exists; Jewish lifestyle, because it testifies of the Word's existence; and the Jew, whether he lives the lifestyle or not, because he is a threat that it might continue to exist even if the first two could be destroyed!

Thanks be to God, He did not hide His oracles! Anybody, whether good or evil, knows where they can find them. The church can go around talking about being "The New Testament Church" all they want, but it will never take away from the truth that we must have the Hebrew Bible to understand what we call the New Testament. This, in no small part, is because the most appropriate way to view a great amount of what is taught in the New Testament is to understand it's there to help those who are not part of the chosen nation how to learn and apply what that nation was established to teach the world. The entire New Testament is there to get everyone, both Jew and non-Jew, to look back into the Hebrew Bible once again, and see that the events surrounding Jesus' life are actually the prophecy the world should have been waiting for ever

since that day man was driven from the Garden of Eden!

I made the statement earlier in this study that as a non-Jew, you can make the argument that things like the temple and its sacrifices are not for you to enact. Then, I asked you to consider how that currently makes you any different from a Jew, if you desire the things of God? This is a key point to understanding the Hebrew Bible, and thus, the New Testament. As a non-Jew, we can understand that much of what is in the Law may not be ours to enact, because its enacting is not our “responsibility”; but that does not negate our responsibility to know the Law, just the same. The fact all true believers need to know the reason why the laws God gave to Israel exist, is precisely why they exist!

If we read the Hebrew Bible, we find that God says on more than one occasion that certain things are commanded for the home-born and the stranger who sojourns among you. (Ex. 12:41-50, Lev. 16:29-31, 18:24-28) After The Messiah came and there began to be a split among Jews who believed Jesus was The Messiah and those who did not, the gospel went out into all the world in spite of this split. As the gospel went out, there were those in the church who greatly debated about what should be put on the non-Jew and what should not, when it came to the law of Moses. This issue came up mostly because Jews had suffered a great deal of persecution over the centuries and suffered many setbacks due to sin’s destructive power. Things were not as clear cut as they once were or should have been. When

God gave the law, He clearly spoke about the home-born and those living with the Jews. Thus, even if you lived among the Jew and were not Jewish blood, there were stipulations about how you should approach living in Israel. What had gotten lost was the intent of the Torah, and that is why we should call the Old Testament the Hebrew Bible. It was God’s intent for the Jews to be a people who created a core culture. In its more pure form, this would also include the culture existing in a specific place. Under these circumstances, the point of there being people blood born into the nation, people not blood born who were just there on business - so to speak - and those not blood born who were truly there to stay, would have been clear.

Under the circumstances of the way things turned out, by the time of The Messiah, the Jews had been removed from their land and then returned. They also had never truly regained sovereign control of the land from ruling empires. On top of all that, there were a great deal of Jews who never made it back to the land of promise and continued to live on foreign soil. This brings us to what I was talking about when discussing the current difference between Jew and non-Jew among those who claim to be true believers. For the Jews who were off their land, and even for those Jews who were on the land, it became difficult to impossible to follow the law in all its representation. Thus, they began to define how to be Jewish without the tabernacle or temple, and its sacrifices. For Jews not in the land of Israel, they began to define what it was to be Jewish without even having access to Jerusalem or

the seasonal cycle of the Holy Land. Things such as the laws of sacrifice became impossible to follow, and stipulations about all males showing themselves three times a year at the temple became the same. (Deut. 12:1-14, Ex. 23:14-17) The list goes on, but the point is that the Jews did not simply ignore their calling to be a core people of the Word. What they did was do the best they could in the circumstances they found themselves. Those commandments they could follow they followed, many times at great cost and sacrifice. For those commandments which were simply impossible, they began to find ways to give credit to the fact they knew they should be doing such ceremonies. In many standard prayers and at gatherings for feasts, you will hear Jews use the phrase, "Next year in Jerusalem." This is a way of praying and remembering there is a more appropriate way and/or place to carry out many of these commanded ceremonies.

By the time of Jesus, these kinds of practices were in full swing, and many Jews who had recognized Christ, did not see the issue of Jew and non-Jew so clearly. The Jews in and around Jerusalem had the temple Herod built, but those outside Israel did not have access. In spite of this, they had found ways to give credit to the law even without everything being just the way they needed it to be. It seemed a logical thought that if non-Jews were going to believe on Jesus as The Messiah, they too should do what they could to follow the law even though they were not in places with ideal conditions throughout the world. The thought was that non-Jewish believers in Jesus, at the very least, fell into the same category as those who sojourned among the Jews. If the chosen nation had been living on their land with a sovereign

King and temple in place, being Jewish would have been clear-cut. If non-Jews desired to come among them and be a part of the core, the path they needed to take was clear. Under these conditions, it would have been obvious that not everyone in the world could come and live in and as the nation of Israel. However, this was not the case at the time of Jesus. Of course, the ever growing church consisting of many non-Jews was scattered among the nations, but so was the Jewish core!

Unfortunately, this debate about how much non-Jews should be subject to enacting the Law, among both Jews and non-Jews, is what has led to false teaching which still persists in the church today, which says: you could not be saved before Christ, unless you became a Jew. Many teach that now you do not have to because Jesus changed all that. This is building doctrine not using all Scripture, but on something which is already a misunderstanding of the Word. The truth goes back to the facts we have been talking about. God was entrusting His Word to a core of people, who were also responsible under the covenant to enact its ceremony as living prophesy. Jesus did not change this; He came to fulfill this. This is why it's a baseline fact that The Messiah had to be a Jew. Jesus also told us point-blank, not one little part of the law would change until everything is fulfilled. (Matt. 5:17-18) Thus, nothing has changed because The Messiah has come, other than the fact we now know who The Messiah is, and more about what the prophesy has been telling us all along.

You see, creating a core of people who kept the example clean is a most important

point of the Jewish nation's existence. In reality, there is about as much talk in the law about separating out from among the nation Jews who did not desire to follow the law, as there is about causing the non-Jew to conform. (Ex. 12:15, 31:14) This emphasizes the point that God was interested in using whosoever would follow. However, He would start with the people He developed for the purpose. God set it up this way because man is very cultural in his thinking. A non-Jew was only going to be compelled to do the things of the law because they wanted to be a part of the Jewish nation for some personal reason, or they truly understood that the Jews held the things of God and they wanted to be part of that. On the other side, if you were/are Jewish, the laws of God are your culture and history. You are going to desire them in some form and/or level just because they are your blood's history. Again, the fear of great truth is not that it will fall into the wrong hands, but that it will be left with no hands!

We can say that by the time of Jesus, much of the Jews' ability to maintain their culture on their land was out of their control. There were many Jews on their land, but they were still intermingled with non-Jewish populations. Jews had turned to looking exclusively at who was blood born. The idea of those who sojourned with them was no longer just about those who lived on the land, but specifically about those who chose to be a part of the core in the same way a blood born Jew was supposed to be. The argument - and I will stress here that not everyone or even very few were clear on this - was that as the Gospel went out, and non-Jews began to believe in The Messiah,

should that not also mean they desire to be, or need to be, under the law like a sojourner?

What clarifies this argument is the understanding about why God wanted the Jewish nation in the first place. It all boils down to the fact there should be a core created by the Jewish nation which ideally should be a clear-cut culture, not just modeled off the law God gave, but strictly compliant and created by it! Keeping in mind that a strict adherence requires not just a certain people, but the land itself as well. This, in no small part, because God chose Jerusalem to be the place where the temple should stand, and all those elements of the law preformed. If a non-Jew wants to be a part of this culture, then there are requirements just as there are on the blood born Jew. However, a Jew cannot rightfully just walk away and say I don't want to be a part of this core, because they are born into the covenant. If they desire to serve God, their calling is clear! (Gen. 17:1-22) This is why, what you find by reading the Scripture is the "sojourning" stipulation. The calling was put exclusively on those of the Jewish nation so as a nation they could be the example. If those who were not Jews lived there and did not follow the law, it would interfere with the purity of the example. If they did not live exclusively with the Jews, this was not a problem. Which means, just because a non-Jew desires to live in the ways of God, it does not automatically make them part of the core culture, and for good reason.

Probably the easiest way to understand this is to say, believing all non-Jewish believers in God must be under the law like the Jew, is a lot like saying, anyone who

professes Jesus as their Saviour must enter full-time ministry. Not all are called to be a part of the five-fold ministry, (Eph. 4:8-16) and not all are called to be a part of the core culture the Torah was entrusted to, and to create. The primary culture the Torah creates is only to be maintained by a specific blood born nation. We must understand that the job of holding the example the Torah is attempting to create is a big job. You do not walk in one day and say, alright I'm ready, and go right to work. It requires extensive preparation which your average non-Jew does not obtain from their youth, and would be practically a full time job to learn as an adult. The idea that you could take the message out into a sin-filled world and expect every person who received the good news to be trained well enough to do this job, would take organization beyond man's ability, for sure! It's one thing for Jews to train non-Jewish servants or sojourners who live directly with them to follow the law, but if everyone everywhere who believed in God were required to enact the law, it would mean that only the Jew or highly trained non-Jew could take the message out. Only they could begin the process of bringing everyone who believed up to speed with how to live the Law, with any efficiency. (Acts 15:1-22) It would also take the emphasis off the grace of God and squarely put it on works. Just because some are called, or because of their proximity to the chosen people need to be conformed to the calling in order to accomplish a piece of God's work here on this earth, we should not confuse this with a requirement for salvation.

Paul says in I Timothy 3:1 "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bish-

op, he desireth a good work." However, his intent in saying this is to lay out the kind of base qualities a man in ministry should have. In verse 6 he tells us one of the stipulations is, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." The church has enough problems with sticking to this commandment that ministers and those in church leadership positions should not be novices! One can only imagine what a burden it would be on the chosen nation to attempt to train all believers in God to maintain the core culture they were covenanted to. Jewish children, with believing parents, grow up in a home where the Torah is not just read and talked about, but studied and followed. They do not celebrate the holidays non-Jews celebrate; they celebrate the feasts God gave in the law and a handful of others which came about because of their following of the Torah and the resulting history. Jews do not just memorize a verse here or there; they truly hide the Word in their hearts and enact the law in their lives. As I mentioned earlier in this study, many Jewish children by the time they are preteens have a far better knowledge of the Bible than most non-Jewish ministers ever obtain, and that should tell us a lot about what I am getting at here.

Maintaining the core and performing the Torah is no light matter; and it should come as no surprise, when we stop to think about it, that not just everyone who comes to believe in Jesus should be thrown in as part of the core example. This is also why no self-proclaimed church can or should believe they are in anyway a replacement, or even could be a replacement, to the chosen

nation God has been working to develop for millenniums.

We should understand that even in Israel itself there were/are stipulations about who could do what jobs. Only a select group within the Jewish nation was to serve in positions such as the priesthood. Within that select group there was even a smaller group selected to be High Priests. The ministry is an exclusive deal, which only God can place the calling on a life to do. What I think people miss when considering the idea of whether everyone should be responsible to exemplify the Torah is that to live for God is the truth the Jewish ceremony and the ministry is attempting to teach, not the ministry itself. Blood sacrifice does nothing in reality to cover or wash away sin. This is why Abraham told Isaac "...God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:..." Genesis 22:8 in spite of the fact Isaac had asked about the physical sacrifice they were going to perform. Abraham understood this even without the Torah and its ceremony, but the Torah was given to and through specific covenanted decedents of Abraham because others needed to understand this!

This is something the New Testament helps us understand more clearly, but again is a truth which has existed from the foundation of the world. (I Pe. 1:18-21) Only the shed blood of The Messiah washes away "...all sin." I John 1:7 While God gave Israel the law in order to show what a righteous culture might look like, it was also the giving of prophesy. The law's ceremonies are not a cookie cutter mold for what all righteous cultures have to take on as religious practice. Again, this is because the ceremony is not what saves us. Only the grace of

God, through faith which is the gift of God, can do that! (Eph. 2:8) Also, we should consider that no matter how much a certain people or culture might be righteous, they will never be the ones who are responsible for the oracles of God, and the place where God has physically chosen to set His name, as the Jews exclusively are.

This is seen in the fact, even the Jews, no matter where they may reside, and in what numbers, should never attempt to rebuild the temple on any spot other than the one God specifically has chosen. The reason Jews cannot currently follow the laws of sacrifice has nothing to do with the idea propagated by many churches, which is that they are not supposed to now that Jesus has come. It has simply to do with the fact they have no temple, which is the only spot where proper sacrifice can be performed. Performing the ceremony correctly is more important than getting it done at all. (I Sam. 15:17-23) This is simply because the power of performing these ceremonies has to do with teaching people. They do not save nor cleanse anybody, and God has made that amply clear by sending His Son to die for us on the cross. The lesson the performances is meant to teach is part of what leads us to the more simple and basic truths of righteousness, not something which should pull us away!

So, I say again, the Law is not what saves us, therefore it is not meant to be the religious practice of the world. Nor even of all those who claim to serve God. There is no reason to believe that the continuance of prophesy unfolding weakens the already existing Scripture. This is even clearer when we understand that the Hebrew Bible itself

has an authority issue. Just as the New Testament is nothing but a good story without the Hebrew Bible, most of the Hebrew Bible is nothing more than a good story without those first five books called the Torah!

The bulk of the Hebrew Bible tells the Jew (as well as the non-Jew) how things came to be the way they are. It shows the mistakes man typically makes, and it confirms on more than one level that God is true to His promises. However, what it all points back to are those books which were given to create the Jewish nation in the first place. What the Jew has always needed is guidance on how to set their course correctly. For that, they couldn't/can't simply use the books which told/tell them how it all unfolded. They have to go back to the Torah just as it has always been from the start of their nation.

For the Jew, it's a difficult enough task, living in and amongst the world, to exemplify the law. However, for the non-Jew who is coming out of any number of man-made traditions, cultures, and/or religions, and who may even be the only believer among many nonbelievers, it would be wrong to ask them to take on such a ministry. The Bible instructs in more than one place that fathers, masters, and the like should not, and God willing not, grieve children or servants by asking more from them than is possible to deliver at the time. (Col. 4:1, Eph. 6:4, I Cor 10:13) The thing that truly makes a non-Jew different from a Jew is that for the Jew most all these practices have historical and cultural meaning. As they spend their lives following these laws for that purpose (which is also directly attached to God Him-

self and what He has done for them) they can come to the greater understanding of their righteous meanings. This is what caused many Jews to see Jesus as The Messiah. For the non-Jew, many of these practices start out having no meaning; and God does not want the non-Jewish believer to simply replace their pagan traditions and religious practices with Jewish ones which would have little to no more value to them than their old ones. God wants people to receive the truth the representative laws are trying to demonstrate. All this means there should be an understanding among all true believers that every law in the Torah has something to teach, and because of them, more non-Jewish believers should be drawn to increasingly righteous practices which in many cases will, in the end, mirror, in many ways, those of the Jewish nation!

If we will immerse ourselves in those first five books of the Word, and continually glean the advantages to our faith which exist in the Torah, we will begin to see and be able to live in the righteousness it teaches. Whether Jew or non-Jew, we must all start with the Torah in order to gain a correct understanding in our everyday lives. This is a path away from religious practice and into purpose and solidity which will accomplish a work in our hearts, lives, and the world around us!

Let's stay in God's Word!

## **FBS continued from pg. 4**

becomes/is necessary like it was at the time of the flood. How often do you think evil men who do not want God involved in their lives are going to call on God to make a judgment against the crime of murder? What we see in the world which man has developed is a tendency to take these matters into our own hands, putting government systems in between God and individuals. This, in spite of the fact we admit our justice is blind! What God is saying is He knows man will make his own choices without Him, and God will not on any kind of regular basis, force His way past that choice even to deal with the crime of murder on this planet. He can do this because of the fact we live in a temporal world, and verse 5 shows us we should make no mistake about the fact God still sees. We will stand before Him, and He will require the blood. However, God does not leave it at that. What verse 6 tells us is that there is a standard punishment which even man should carry out against the crime of murder!

Now, to the question of why? Well, man may not have all the dominion over every living thing which he once had. Because of sin, man has not accomplished what God had in store for him. However, humans are still the pentacle life on this planet. Nothing is going to diminish that truth. All other life, lives and dies in a natural cycle which was created in the beginning, but man does not die for that reason. Man dies because of sin. Thus, God is working with man to bring him

through the freewilled choices he makes, and the destruction his disobedience brings, in order to redeem all those who still desire the things God created us to be. We have all fallen short of the glory of God; (Rom. 3:23) and in a state of being responsible for the knowledge of good and evil, we have all made mistakes worthy of death. (James 1:15, Rom. 6:23) However, as I said earlier, God did not place the immediate judgment of death on us just because we all fall short of His glory; and if God is not going to put us to immediate death, it's certainly not the place of another to make this judgment. What God points to specifically in this verse is a simple fact we were told in the opening verses of Genesis: Man is made in the image of God. Essentially, if you do not respect the life of fellow humans, then you show your ultimate disrespect not just for God's creation, but for God Himself!

This verse brings us to another issue, and that is the fact some people believe this was the beginning of God ordained government systems. They say because God makes the statement that murderers should receive what we call capital punishment, God was establishing the idea of principalities which would carry out such a thing. However, this is an example of man thinking backward. We need to be careful not to interpret the Bible's words on the basis of how things turned out, instead of on the basis of what the story tells us was going on at the time. There were no governments at the time Noah stepped off the ark. We do not know if there was much of what we would have

defined as government before the flood; but what we do know is this: There is never a mention of God going to a government in order to warn man of the flood. This is odd if there were government rulers, because later there are many prophetic words often sent directly to governments of this world through prophets, telling them of coming judgment against their actions. There is probably no better example of this than when God sent Jonah to the Assyrian empire's capital of Nineveh to warn them that they should repent or be destroyed. Noah was never asked to do such a thing.

What may be a better indication there were no established governments, like we think of today, before the flood is that Noah never has any trouble with any of them attempting to stop him from building the ark. Again, we must remember man is not evolving. Man was just as he is now, and if he had government in a world where the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, it's hard to believe they would not have tried to put a stop to the fact this mad man was building, not just a public safety hazard, but an incitement of public panic about the stability of the world!

The point is that government, in the way we know it, was not developed until the Tower of Babel. Not only was the system developed in order to accomplish the tower, it was the true point of the whole exercise. After God confounded the languages of men and spread them out over the world, man put government systems in

place all over the world for the same purpose as what was attempted at the tower. Later empires would show us the idea could not overcome the confounding of languages effect and create one centralized government over all mankind. However, man still continually migrates to more restrictive government systems as being the answer to his troubles instead of part of the cause. To say God had something to do with driving man in this direction or the initial establishment of such systems, is more than just a bad suggestion!

The evidence God was not telling us we should set a principality in place as a way to carry out this task is found in the way the laws given to Israel handles the crime of murder. In Numbers chapter 35, God tells Israel to set-up cities of refuge where a person who kills another human can run for safety. What are they running from? They're running from the fact that a relation of the person they killed has the right, under this law defined to Noah, to kill the person who murdered their kin. The cities were meant to bring something a bit more to the process, but not put government in the way of carrying out the punishment. The point was to assist right judgment. A person should not die for the crime of murder until they get a chance to explain their side of the story, at least, if they desire to. This is important because if a person did not intend to kill the other person and the whole thing was a sad accident, it would be wrong for the avenger to take their life. The cities of refuge

were a stop gap measure against the problem - the avenger of blood may simply kill the person in the heat of anger without taking the time to know what really happened. If the avenger finds out and agrees, after the fact, that it was an accident, they would have to live with that guilt for the rest of their lives!

Now, just like murder cases today where a person is acquitted and the family and/or friends don't agree, even after hearing the other side of things, the avenger may still have a desire to kill the person in spite of the fact the death appears to be an accident. In this event, the city gives the person who did the killing a chance to escape the death penalty, but it does not get that person off the hook completely. They still will have to live in the city of refuge they ran to until the death of the current High Priest. If they stay within the boundaries of the city, the avenger has no right to take their life. If they go out and are struck down by the avenger, then they received the recompense of their own decision. The only way they can go home with the legal assurance they are safe, is to outlive the current High Priest. If they do, they can go home, and the avenger will be considered a murderer if they strike them down at that point.

What all this accomplishes is something many legal systems of today do not. If you kill, you will not be sought by a government ran justice system which may or may not be indifferent to your crime. You will be sought by the ones who have the greatest reason to avenge the killing. If

they find you outside one of these cities, you will be punished by death. Now, if a person truly kills another human, it's not an accident, and they still run to one of these cities, witnesses to the situation may allow this to come to light. If it does, the avenger will still get the chance to strike them down. If it does not, the avenger has the opportunity to ensure the murderer serves their sentence because the avenger will still get the opportunity to strike them down if they leave the city. These cities give a person who is not truly worthy of death a way to survive and live their lives. At the same time, a person truly guilty of murder who is not able to be convicted is not simply free to go back out into society. Because only those who kill on accident are suppose to run to these cities, there is also an automatic assumption of innocence, not guilt, for the one who runs. All this has a bunch of aspects to it which we do not have space to cover right now, but the simplest point is that it gives everyone involved some time to stop and think about if they are doing the right thing, while protecting society at large from the crime of murder.

Now, this should confirm to us that even in the nation of Israel, God did not lay the job of avenging the blood of man on a government or principality. The job still belonged first and foremost with those who cared for the person killed. Whether it was a direct relative, the family tribe, or a community the person was part of, the job belonged to those who lost someone. If God did not set-up a specific principality to carry out this system in Israel, why

would we interpret the words here in Geneses as God telling Noah there should be governing entities of man, even if just to accomplish this task?

One explanation people use for saying God was establishing government here, comes by pointing to a later scripture in Romans chapter 13 where we are told God ordains rulers. However, the scripture in Romans is more related to Matthew 5:38-39 where Jesus instructs us not to resist evil. There are choices made by man on this earth about the way he desires to run his world. Those of us who desire the ways of God should recognize we are not perfect in all our choices, but in so many ways, we are also simply caught up in it all. The Jews wondered if it was right to pay tribute to Caesar, and Jesus pointed out that the money system they depended on had Caesar's inscription on it. They should pay Caesar what was Caesar's and God what was God's. The bottom line is this: God did not command nor suggest that man establish governments. That was man's idea and choice all on his own. Because of man's free will, God allows the system to exist. He has taken steps to show man the error of his ways, and put a stop to government's all encompassing ability, but He did not put an end to the practice altogether. As believers in God's Word, we may know judgments and ways of going about things which would develop a more righteous society, but the government has taken many of those things into their hands. Rulers will have to stand before God for the wrong choices they

have made, and the ways in which they have inhibited a more righteous path.

Individuals should not resist government just because God did not command it. In Romans, Paul is instructing us to follow ruling systems on the basis that we understand the truth that there is a higher power. We do not believe we are all free to do whatever we want because we are the pentacle of God's creation in this universe. We are subject to God and His Holiness. Thus, any government which exists over man is also subject to God. We should understand that any government of man is never going to be perfect like God, and we should follow with that understanding. As servants of God, we know there is a reason for a justice system; and because of verses like the ones we have been studying, we understand why it does not bear the sword in vain. We also understand that no matter how governments may stop or even just inhibit our individual ability to carry out the justice God's Word tells us is most appropriate, in the end of it all, we know it's actually in God's hands. Thus, we are instructed, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Romans 12:19

Until next time, Shalom!