

Free - Take One



Shaqah

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*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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As we continue our overview of the book of Deuteronomy, we ended last time talking about how the first-born son of a family was to receive the blessing of being a first-born. In spite of the fact a man may have more than one wife, a like or dislike of one wife over the other was not to affect how he treated his sons in this regard. All this follows in a line of many general instructions Moses was giving the nation as he spoke to them on the east side of the Jordan as the nation was preparing to cross over and begin taking the promised land. That brought us through Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 17, and we will continue talking about stipulations concerning the family as we begin this time with verse 18.

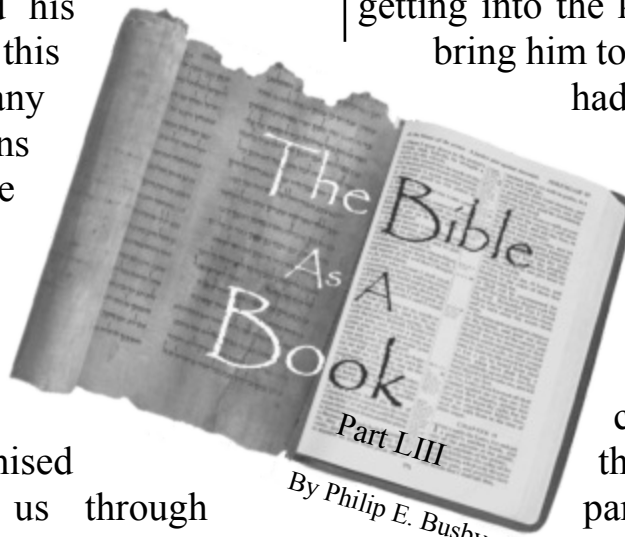
Staying with matters concerning the family, God shows how serious He is among the chosen nation about cleansing it of people with a rebellious attitude. So much so that if a son was instructed and chastised by his parents but continued to be

a rebellious child, and that rebellion came to a point the parents no longer knew what to do because he simply would not receive instructions, they could take that son to the elders of the city. These elders would no doubt be aware of the parents trials with such a son. This would likely be due to him getting into the kind of trouble that would bring him to them for past misdeeds he

had done. Thus, the process of bringing the son to the city elders was not just about them making a choice, but it would bring a community witness to the event. It certainly would not just be the words of very wicked parents against a child, and that was important because

once it was confirmed that this truly was a rebellious child, it would mean the son's life. At that point of desperation the son would be stoned to death, and this would serve to keep the nation free from those who, in being rebellious against their parents, would go on to be rebellious against the Laws of God!

In administering capital punishment it



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was common in the Law for the instruction to be that the person be stoned. However, while there were specific times this was to be done, how a person was to be killed was not always stipulated. Thus, there would be specific instructions given for how to handle another common way to carry out the punishment, and that was by hanging. At times, stoning was a way of not only killing a person but burying them as well by continuing to pile on the stones. When this was not the case, it was usually because it had been done in a public place and the body would be taken away for burial. However, when hanging is used, not only is it likely done in a public place, it is often the intent to let the dead body hang there as a continuing public display which might deter others from wrong doing. God makes it clear that any time Israel used this type of execution, the body was not to be left long. No matter when the execution took place, the body was to be buried the same day. God would not have the land defiled. There were times capital punishment was to be used, but it was to dispose from the nation those who had done wrong against The Lord. Leaving dead bodies in the open served just the opposite.

Next, we see stipulations about how to handle items that are lost and found. The examples begin with the most valuable items of those days, that being cattle and sheep. If someone found one of these animals straying in a place they knew the animal did not belong, the person was not to ignore it as if it was not their problem. Instead, they were to put forth an effort to bring the animal back to its owner. If one did not know where to take the animal, they were to take it home with them and care for

it until the owner came looking for it. At that point you would restore the animal to the owner, and there is no mention of asking any kind of fee for the care. This has directly to do with treating one's neighbor as one's self. Who knows but that one day someone else might do the same for you? This is why it was not to be done just for cattle and sheep, but the list includes donkeys, clothing, etc., meaning anything of value one might find which belonged to another. In speaking of animals, it is also made clear one is not to ignore someone who is having trouble with an animal that has fallen in a ditch or the like. They were to take the time to help that person and/or animal, and all this is a simple precedence which showed they were not to ignore the needs of others.

In continuing to instruct on general conduct of one's daily life, God turns to a simple stipulation which has to do with keeping a separation of male and female. Not in the idea they are to be separated one from another, but in recognizing God created humans to be male and female. To keep problems in this area from even beginning to come up, God says this should remain obvious on a visible level, telling us a woman is not to wear the kind of clothing a man would, and a man is not to wear the kind of things a woman would. This stipulation gets debated over a lot, or at least it used to, but it is a most basic idea. Since the beginning of people wearing clothing, there has been an instinct as to generally what men want and need to wear on the basis of who men are. This differs greatly from what women desire to wear based on who they are. If nothing else, there are obvious physical differences

between males and females that can dictate what looks good, what is practical, as well as what can be worn. What God is saying is that we should not attempt to overcome this but maintain the difference. If there are those who desire to wear clothing which looks more like the opposite sex, God says it is an abomination. This because it's not just about what an individual feels or likes, it's about having a society that respects the way God created us above even personal preferences or desires.

The next stipulation is about another natural instinct. If one finds a bird's nest, no matter if it's in a tree or on the ground, that contains eggs being sat on, or chicks being cared for by a parent, one was not to disturb the nesting process by taking the eggs. Once the chicks were able to be cared for by a person, God says they could be taken, but one was not to also take the parent. This is the kind of wise practice that should be observed when hunting for any animals or what they produce. If the source, such as the adults responsible for producing more, are discouraged from breeding or in general depleted, you will eventually have nothing to gather. Even if the species is only useful for things such as keeping down other animals, like snakes, one certainly does not wish to deplete them. With certain animals this can be true of taking the young or in taking any of that animal during breeding and/or birthing seasons. Birds sitting on a nest of eggs is the equivalent of other animals having unborn young developing in females. If one is not interested in food but gathering the young, God was also attempting to keep the nation from

inbreeding their domestic animals. If you have a male and/or females, among the chicks you gather, you wouldn't want to breed them using their parent.

God continues with instructions concerning good practices for building and planting, ones that encourage safety and health. First, when one built a house they were to build what today we might call a guardrail around the roof's edge. In older times, or when using certain material, it is common to use a short wall for this and leave holes at the bottom or have narrow openings every so often to allow water drainage. In any case, the stipulation of this wall would be for the sake of keeping people who went up on the roof from easily falling off and getting hurt or killed. This might not make sense to us because we think about having sloped roofs which people are aware they should stay off of or be cautious on. However, in the days the Law was being given it was far more common to build flat roof houses, and very common for those roof areas to be easily accessible for use in laying out crops to dry, or as what we might call a deck. This makes this stipulation more necessary, as any high place being used for work or recreation can be dangerous if it's easy to fall off of.

The next stipulation is that you are not to plant a variety of seeds for growing one kind of crop intermingled with others. In this stipulation the illustration of a vineyard is used to make it more clear what kind of practice God is speaking about, but it does not mean only vines will be hurt by doing this. This is also not the prohibition

of combining plants of similar kinds in a test environment to create a better breed, because this is controlled. When the outcome is bad, it is found to be something you do not want to do again, but if good it can be propagated as a new breed. Of course, this can still be used to produce bad products for selfish reasons, but when we randomly mix seeds out in the open, the seeds we get from such a crop, and especially plants that grow long term, such as grape vines, will be of an unknown combination no matter what our intent. This can be bad in many ways. It can produce a weak plant; it can corrupt the seed stock you store; it can also give you a product you cannot honestly say what it is.

The next stipulations are actually very akin in some ways to both the male/female clothing, and mixed seed stipulations. This is why they are lined up here in spite of seeming to some people out of place. The first is that an ox and donkey are not to be used together for plowing. Anyone who has or knows someone who has experience in doing work with team or pair animals knows this is a bad idea, but one can see how if that's all you had, you might give it a try. God tells Israel they are not to do it, and there is no justification for doing it. This has to do with treating animals, especially ones you keep and use for labor, humanely. It is not just hard on the person attempting to plow for the animals to be mixed like this, it is hard on the animals even more so. Two donkeys may be able to plow certain soil just fine, but they do not have the strength of an ox. This means the donkey will mostly be overworked attempting to keep up if put with an ox. The ox, being the stronger

animal, will also be overworked because it will end up doing most of the pulling as well as having to struggle with the fact the donkey can't keep up. All this is not to mention the fact there is a size difference which causes the entire yoke and/or harness to be very hard on the animals.

Next is a rule we also do not follow much in our modern world, and while we think it a good thing, there is no telling how many allergies and the like can actually be contributed to the practice. The stipulation is that Israel was not to wear clothing made of different materials combined into the fabric. The example used here is that of wool and linen together, but as with all the rest, this is just to show what God means. To some degree this stipulation has to do with the reason many modern laws have long required clothing to have labels that tell what materials the fabric is made of. Without a label one might be able to tell something is one material or the other for the most part, but if there is a bit of something else mixed in it might not be discernible. It would be dishonest to sell clothing as being wool and have actually used other cheaper material along with it. In Israel this was not to happen or have to be worried about. People could choose clothing on the basis of allergies or just comfort, depending on what worked for them. How true it is that there is a great number of rashes, allergies, and the like from wearing things with a mixture of materials, only God knows.

Moses also mentions the stipulation of those unique fringes the chosen nation was to have on their clothing. These would have been tassels of some sort, pieces of

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we talked about the birth of Isaac. We talked about the fact Abraham made it through to this point in spite of any and all mistakes he and Sarah had made. They would finally see the son God had promised them. We also talked about how long this must have seemed in real life. This because it's easy to read a story without really stopping to think about what it must have felt like to wait year after year. However, this is the miracle of Isaac's birth. Not only did it happen because God made it possible, but in the light of how much we should trust God is able to do what He said He would do, we should be inspired on some level with the fact Abraham and Sarah never gave up and actually made it to this point. This brought us through Genesis chapter 21 verse 5 and we are ready to start verse 6 in this segment.

Verse 6 turns more directly to Sarah's reaction to these events and it shows us that fact we talked about last time, which is that Sarah was laughing with joy over the son God had given them. She also mentions specifically that all who hear her laughter will laugh with her, and this is a moment of worship we should be careful not to miss. When God had come to this couple to tell them it would be about the same time in the next year Isaac would be born, Sarah laughs at the thought this could still happen. As we know, she did not get away with doing this because God asks Abraham why Sarah laughed at the thought? Sarah's human instinct was to deny she laughed, but she

knew she had let her emotions get the best of her on both accounts. Now, in a joyful heart Sarah gives direct reference to this incident by allowing what God had granted to cause her to laugh for joy. This is not something she does in secret but in the open so all others around her can hear her laugh.

One might say, of course she is going to laugh, but the aspect which is important is that the very action Sarah took in response to God telling her something she thought was impossible was going to happen was now her reaction to God making it a reality. In this, she has turned her sin into praise but more importantly, as others around her hear she had a son, there would no doubt be those who would laugh for the very same reason Sarah originally laughed. They would laugh in disbelief at the idea Sarah had not once again done what she and Abraham had done in using a surrogate to get Ishmael, or the thought they'd believe it only when they saw it. This is what Sarah was saying about laughing with all others. As friends and acquaintances found out this unbelievable news and, in fact, did not believe it, Sarah would be willing to share her testimony of how she too thought this was impossible, but God had proven her human thinking incorrect. God had still been willing to use her life to show His great glory, and that made her happy. This incident is really no different than the fact the children of Israel would one day sing unto The Lord after crossing the Red Sea and escaping Pharaoh's army. If we remember that story, we know

Israel did not start out believing God could deliver them, but once He did, they sang about what God had done.

Now, if you do not believe you should take all that from the verse, all one has to do is read verse 7 because that is the confirming verse for what we have been talking about. In this verse Sarah goes on to explain exactly what she means in that she specifically poses the question of who would have thought it possible she and Abraham could have a child. The way she states this even comes with the emphasis some might have believed it still possible for Abraham to have a son through a younger woman, but God had made it possible for her to give him not only a child, but a son, which in the day and society they lived was very important to the continuance of a house. Thus, she points out again that Abraham was indeed old, but considering Sarah was the mother it simply did not matter what you might want to come up with to explain this birth, it was a miracle. Sarah had carried a child for a normal period of gestation so there was no doubt she had been pregnant. Now Sarah's body was able to give nourishment to the child in the normal way God created the female body to do following pregnancy. This too was a miracle in and of itself, because even if she survived the pregnancy, the idea her body still had the strength to do this would be amazing. It would also leave even less room to doubt this was Sarah's baby!

As we go into verse 8, we begin to move out of talking about the amazement and praise to God over this miracle and go back to the mode of talking about actual events that follow this. A problem I have

noted in hearing people talk about the next events is that for all the emphasis the first verses of this chapter bring to how Abraham and Sarah feel about Isaac's birth, we tend to forget those facts as soon as we get into the story about Ishmael. In doing this, people find yet another reason to think somewhat negatively about Sarah, and this is unfair. We must keep in mind that Sarah's reaction to the next events is based on the fact her focus was on making sure Isaac's birth is seen as a testimony to the power of God. If Sarah's great desire was to use it to testify to all those outside her house, she certainly was not going to tolerate anything that might hinder that work coming from inside her house.

To start all this off, verse 8 is connected to the previous verses in that it emphasizes Isaac grew in strength and was weaned from his mother. This confirms Sarah had no trouble providing for Isaac right from the start. She was also able to take it all the way through the normal cycle of a child needing milk until it is able to begin eating more regular foods. Also, there is the fact Isaac did well on this diet, meaning it was not just the arrogance of Sarah insisting he stay on her milk as a way for her not to be embarrassed. All these are signs of how much God's will was truly at work, and once the day came that Isaac was considered truly through this beginning state of life, Abraham holds a great feast. This is not separate from the praise of the first verses, but a continuation of it. While it might have been normal for a proud father to hold a feast of some sort at this point in order to mark the child's survival and getting to this much stronger physical state, we are not told of this being done for

Ishmael. Maybe the Bible simply does not record the event, but in any case, we have another indicator of how much Abraham was recognizing Isaac as the true heir of his house. This directly concerns the upcoming incident with Ishmael.

Verse 9 tells us while this feast was going on Sarah witnessed Ishmael mocking. We can take this as he was mocking Isaac directly, which Isaac was likely too young to really understand, or it could mean he was generally mocking the event. It could also be referring to more of what today we might call “acting out” and misbehaving in general during the event. In any case, it was obvious to Sarah this was not the normal behavior for Ishmael. This was Ishmael being upset and/or showing how much he did not accept the idea he would be displaced by Isaac as the heir to the house. Ishmael was a teenager and no doubt understood very good and well that as the first-born son of Abraham he was the rightful heir according to tradition. Let us not forget that the very point in Abraham having a son through Hagar was to gain the heir they felt Abraham would never have if he waited any longer hoping to have one with Sarah. We do not know when Ishmael had been informed this would not be his place in life, but if it had not been made clear to him before now, this feast and what it was specifically about would have made it clear.

If you know anything about teenagers, one can see how hard this had to be on Ishmael, and due to that I'm sure there is no end to how much different people would sympathize with him. However, what this is, is another example of how much we

should be inspired by people such as Saul's son Johnathan. Johnathan was the son of the king of Israel, and heir not just to his father's house, but the throne of a nation. God had rejected Saul, and if we study the character of Johnathan we see how much this did not have to do with the idea Saul's heir would not have made a good king. (1 Sam. 18:1-4, 19:1-7, 20) No, God taking the throne from Saul had to do with two major points, and this was first that Saul had failed and there needed to be a very known consequence given by God to show that He had allowed the nation to have a king but would not be pleased with a king who did not trust in Him. The second point is that God wanted to show the nation how much it was totally up to Him as to who the king should be. If God said there was to be a change, there would be a change, and men could do nothing about it. In all this, Johnathan shows his great willingness to serve God. He not only doesn't try to thwart this in any way, he remains the closest of friend and supporter of the very man he knew God would replace his father with.

We can empathize with Ishmael, but what we clearly see is that he does not have this same heart of service to God. No matter how much we may feel bad it had to be this way when it was really no fault of Ishmael's that he had been born as he was, we must all be willing to live for God and serve in His plan. What Ishmael would eventually come to see is that God had plans for him that would more than satisfy his earthly desires. If Ishmael did not care but to mock Isaac and/or his special day, earthly desires would seem to be the only reason for him to be angry at the fact he would not be Abraham's

heir. The mistake we should certainly not make is to confuse Ishmael's desires with being like those of Isaac's later son Jacob. Jacob and Esau had to deal with the fact that in spite of being twins, one was younger and the other older. The older was Esau, and that made him the heir to his father's wealth and the promise of God for the family's future. What we can wrongly discount in Jacob is how much he saw in his older brother a desire for the earthly things but no desire for the promises of God. This was a desire that went very deep in Jacob's life.

Now, Jacob did not take the right actions to get to the place he eventually got which caused him to receive that blessing in place of his brother, but he also faced much hardship for those wrong choices as he took a journey in being molded into what God needed him to be. Jacob would run for his life with not much more than the clothes on his back and some instructions about how to find family in Mesopotamia. On the other hand, Esau would stay at home building his house with all the advantages a son who was poised to get his father's house would have. The only exception to this was that Esau would not eventually inherit his father's land and belongings. However, upon Jacob's return we see how much this did not matter for Esau because he had built a life of his own filled with so much of what he wanted in this world, he found no need to be angry with his brother and care about getting any more than he already had. (Gen. 33:1-17)

Ishmael could have been as Johnathan, but he was not, and what this shows us is how much, just like Esau as well as Jacob, he was not in the correct mind to be used of God in the way he needed to be.

He could have been like Jacob in wanting the promise of God, but this would have required him to learn how to yield to the fact he could not take the main role. We can argue all the human thinking we want, but the truth of the matter is no matter if our place in life is to be an Isaac or a David, an Ishmael or a Jacob, we all must yield to what God needs us to be. If we are as Johnathan and can accept our place, we will be much happier and better off than if we resist. We can even have an easier time than one who is given what we see as the greater reward, because such a place can be a burden of service where we will have to face much hardship to do the job and/or be molded into what's right for it.

As we go into verse 10, we need to keep in mind all of what we have discussed in this segment so far. Verse 10 tells us what Sarah did after taking note of Ishmael's behavior at this event, and that was to go to Abraham and tell him to cast out Hagar and Ishmael. In many people's minds this is basically the beginning and the end of the attitude Sarah had on this subject, but that is not the case. As I mentioned above, we must take Sarah's reaction in the light of how much this was not just mocking Isaac, her, or anyone else in the family. This was not about Ishmael mocking the choice he would not be the heir. This was Ishmael mocking the very plan of God! At this moment Sarah had a particularly keen view of this issue, and it had to be hard for her to stand there with such a great desire that this event be a highlight of praise to God's power and have Ishmael acting in a way that would serve just the opposite.

To this, some would argue her action

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XXVII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

In our last segment, we talked about the priesthood and specifically about the position of the High Priest. We talked about how it was established in the Law to be and how it had changed by the time Jesus came. We also discussed why it came to be handled the way it was. We did this to emphasize how much Jesus came when He did in order to set all things straight, but also how much that had to start at the House of God. This related to our question, because in thinking about the Jews being rejected for the fact they did not accept Jesus as The Messiah, we must realize how much God was actually using the chosen nation in order to accomplish what needed to be accomplished before the ways of men caused the nation to collapse.

All this really leads into a discussion about what we see going on with the establishment of the modern state of Israel. The nation's reestablishment shows how much it is, in fact, God's will for the nation to stand in the last days, but it also shows us how much having the nation is important to all the world knowing Jesus really is The Messiah. Now, the modern state of Israel has continually had to fight religious and territorial disputes with other people living in the region who do not want the nation to

exist. However, the most pointed effect of this conflict is not the constant fighting and wars that have arisen but the fact there is little to no hint at the nation's ability to rebuild the temple. Where the temple should be is generally known. I say "generally" because there are those who argue over its exact location on what is called the Temple Mount area of Jerusalem, but that aside, if the way was clear, the temple would be rebuilt. This has not happened because in spite of all of Israel's victories in war over their enemies, the Temple Mount has remained such a hot religious issue the chosen nation has not attempted to force their way onto the Temple Mount, much less begin the work of rebuilding the temple.

This is in stark contrast to what happened when the nation returned from the Babylonian captivity during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Yes, the nation was resistant to going ahead and rebuilding the temple, along with Jerusalem itself, due to their fear of the surrounding people who opposed such a thing. However, the altar of burnt offering was set up almost first thing, and that was important to the reestablishment of the sacrifices which are not to be done anywhere else. In time, both the temple and the city of Jerusalem would be built again, and that temple would stand until the building projects of Herod the Great who would build a much larger version of the temple over the top of it. This building project is said to not have affected the daily sacrifices at the

temple, and this means the time of the chosen nation being off their land and the temple sacrifices being stopped for any period was only those seven decades of the captivity. It was only from the time of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians to the time the altar was set up once again after the return.

As it stands at the time of this writing, the modern state of Israel has been back on its land for seventy years, and Jerusalem has been reunified under the control of the Israeli government for 51 years. Yet, the temple still has not been rebuilt, nor the altar set up. Of course, if God wanted this to happen He could immediately make it possible, but He hasn't. This is not as so many want to make it out to be in that the sacrifices were to end after Jesus gave His life, but mostly to the fact the nation is still in the same kind of predicament they were in at the time of Jesus. That is the predicament that they do not really know who the rightful High Priest should be. That said, I should point out there is a modern Sanhedrin and a belief they know who should be the High Priest, but it's hard to say if there is even as much correct thinking in picking this person as there was for choosing a person during the time period leading up to and through Jesus' life. Feeling confident they could now put a man in the position who is even more correctly the one to hold it according to the Law of Moses is very difficult.

What does this mean? It means the chosen nation has been reassembled for the sake of exactly what Jesus said about how He would one day return. Jesus' return will fulfill the next representative Biblical feast on the Jewish calendar. That feast is the Feast of Trumpets, and it represents the fact

The Messiah would one day return to take the throne of Israel, and the world, in spite of who likes it and who does not! When He returns we will see how much the rebuilding of the temple is not something God resists happening because things such as the sacrifices are no longer to be performed, but something God wants to happen only when it can be done correctly. This fact draws us back to the continuing discussion about the history of the chosen nation we have been going over in this series, and more specifically it takes us all the way back to where we left off, which was after Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Keep in mind we have come to this point in the study not because we stepped our way through the life of Christ as one might have expected us to do. Thus, it may feel as if we haven't really covered the life of Christ in this history. However, we really have, in light of the truth of what we are attempting to do in the study. If we wanted to cover the life of Christ, with His life being the focus, it would be a long series in and of itself, but what we are attempting to do is cover the history of the chosen nation overall. Now, I will confess we have spent many segments talking about the time period that comes up to and through the life of Jesus, and that is why we have not taken such a step by step look through the years. However, the truth is, Jesus' life was a small blip on the radar of the overall history of the nation. To say this might sound like I care not to demean the truth The Messiah walked this earth, but I assure you that could not be further from the truth. What I hope these facts will help, especially the Christian mind, take a look at is that human actions can have a great affect on such things!

I say “the Christian mind” because many Christians are taught and/or simply do focus their Bible study on the New Testament. In doing this, Jesus is very large in one's life. Again, there will be those who think I'm headed down the road of saying that is a bad thing, and that is not the case. It is very good if Jesus can remain large in our lives and the bigger the better! However, this should span not just the reading of the New Testament but also the Hebrew Bible. The difference in reading the New versus the Old Testament is really the fact the name Jesus is given to us in the New. Thus, every time we talk about The Messiah and desire to use His proper name, the writers of the New Testament have done just that. When it comes to the Hebrew Bible, this, of course, could not be done. God had not yet given mankind the proper name we would eventually know The Messiah to be called, but that should not diminish our understanding of how much Jesus is talked about, referred to, and represented in the Hebrew Bible.

This is very important because we often think about the fact Jesus, or more simply the coming of The Messiah, was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible without thinking of how much the Hebrew Bible's teachings are as much about Jesus in every way the New Testament is. This fact is what makes the New Testament the Good News or Gospel. The God we have been talking about serving, following, learning from, and loving in the Hebrew Bible is Jesus, and that is what makes the information in the New Testament valuable. (John 14:1-14) This fact is also why the chosen nation should have been prepared to receive Jesus and

make Him their King the moment He revealed Himself. However, talking about Jesus revealing Himself brings us to another point on the issue of how short Jesus' life seems to be when going through a study such as this.

We have covered many individuals, and some of them played a role in the affairs of the nation for decades, yet we mention their names a few times and move on. Really how much we tend to mention a certain individual has to do with what kind of major transition might have taken place during their rule or service. When talking about Jesus, we should see that because He was not accepted as King or High Priest, the nation did not go through a more structural transition during the life of Christ. While many changes took place as the apostles went out to take the Gospel after Jesus ascended, the religious and secular national establishment simply coasted on for another few decades until the inevitable end God sent The Messiah to keep from happening, happened. Also, when we talk about the work of Jesus we should remember He waited until He was about thirty years old to really start His ministry, and His ministry would only last for about three and a half years before He was crucified, rose again, and ascended to The Father. So, while it is true His birth was shown as something special, there were few who really understood what it meant or took it as something that could immediately change the fabric of the nation's existence. Even Jesus' earthly parents had trouble keeping in mind exactly Who they were raising. (Luke 2:41-52) This fact means Jesus walking among us went on for some thirty years

virtually unnoticed, and this makes His time and work seem even shorter than it actually was.

These facts show us how much man's actions affect the work of God. One can argue God did not want to reveal The Messiah until He was a man, but that begs the question of why His birth was signified at all? Why did God put a star in the sky to show where He was. (Matt. 2:1-10) It was a sign men who love to look to the sky to control or know their destiny should all have noticed, meaning about everyone should have known! One can ask, why did God prophesy about John the Baptist coming first if Jesus could have been accepted from day one of His physical walk among us? However, the answer to that is simple. Because God knew the world would not jump at the chance to have The Messiah, especially not right from His birth or childhood, God would need to prepare the way for a man many had known for decades to one day step forward and show Himself to be The Messiah.

As much as some would say, there is no way humans could have accepted a baby as a true leader, we oddly do not think about, if He was not to simply come as a fully grown adult, how should this part of The Messiah's life have looked. Humans fully accept the son of a king is one day going to be king, but Jesus was not accepted in this same way at all. This means once Jesus became an adult there was an equal number of people, amazingly some of the very same people who couldn't have accepted Him as a child, who would then argue the idea of how can we accept a man who has lived among us for so many years as now being The Messiah we have all been waiting for? What

God has constantly used the chosen nation to show us is how much humans can not be pleased. As a student of the Bible one should see this. As much as humans can have differing opinions, we can often change those opinions as time goes on. What is really bad is that we often use the same logic to eliminate all the possibilities of accepting anything God tries to show us, and that is exactly what we're talking about in the life of Christ. How many would be able to accept a child as The Messiah, and thus their king? How many could accept the fact a man they had watched grow up over three decades was actually The Messiah? How many people would find themselves in both categories?

While on this thought let's also ask, in our day, how many people will not be able to accept a man who seems to suddenly appear in Jerusalem and take the throne of Israel as The Messiah? It has not even happened as yet and there is already a deeply held belief in the churches that says such an individual will have to be the anti-christ, so it would seem there are plenty who are prepared to reject Jesus when He returns. Humans will also have the same argument as they had at the time of His first appearing, that being, they do not like how He is going about things. When Jesus came the first time, He was too calm to be The Messiah the chosen nation desired at that moment in their history. When Jesus comes back, in spite of the fact we are told it will cause the flesh eating birds to gather at Jerusalem and the blood will flow to the horses' bridals, there will be many who will make the argument that a man who goes about things using such violent methods can't possibly be the loving Saviour we claim to serve. (Luke 17, Rev. 14:14-20) Our problem is that we do not

listen to God. Instead, we make God into the image we want, then when He does not fit that image, we believe we are justified in defying Him or even disposing of Him. (Rom. 1:22-23) This is exactly what one is judging the chosen nation on in saying they are rejected due to the fact they killed The Messiah, but none of us are any different. Yes, the leaders of the chosen nation did not accept Jesus as The Messiah and that was a mistake. If we believe some of the very individuals who were responsible for taking Jesus to trial and having Him killed actually did know He was The Messiah, we see how deep human thinking can take us. However, none of this gives us the right to condemn the nation, for, again, we all are prone to do the very same kind of things.

Yes, man's choices caused Jesus' earthly walk on this planet to be a short one, and His time of fully showing Himself by working in direct ministry was even shorter. However, the work that needed to be done was accomplished. It is so true that to God a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. (II Pet. 3:8) God has always been at work and will continue to be at work. When God allows it, man's actions can cut short God's work as He comes in a more direct way, but if God was not always prepared or able to do the most crucial work in such a short time, He would not allow it to be cut short. Not allowing the work of The Messiah to be cut short will be the case when Jesus returns, and the very fact God will use force to subdue evil will be the very premise of many people's objection as to how He can't be the true Christ.

With that, let's get back to the point I was headed for near the first of this segment, and that is the truth the only gap in the

temple service being performed before Jesus' first coming was the some seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. The only other time was the interruption of service during the events that led up to Hanukkah. While there are times I like to point out there was indeed allowed to be some gaps prior to Christ in order to help people see the sacrifices were not necessary for man's salvation before Jesus' coming, what I want to do here is point out the size in the gaps were very small compared to the one since Christ. This is where people like to make the argument the sacrifices ended because Jesus had done His work, but not so! This has only to do with where we ended last time and the fact God had taken the position of High Priest into His own hands by making Jesus our High Priest. This was not just figurative, but literal. However, the time for Jesus to actually take over the administration of the temple has not come. To this, some would ask, why then was the nation able to maintain the system they were already doing by the time of Christ for a another few decades after Christ? The answer is the fact the High Priesthood had already come to mean far less than it should long before Jesus came.

Basically, God had accepted man's attempt to handle the High Priesthood for a very long time in spite of the fact they were not totally correct in how they were choosing who that should be. Then there came a point when God said it was time for this to end as He would show them what was right. When God started this process it did not matter who agreed with it or who did not. It would not even have mattered if Jesus Himself was not of the line and lineage that qualified Him to represent the house of Aaron. God had made it clear very early on in giving the Law that He would remain the ultimate authority in

how to administer the Law. This means if man wanted to make a change, such change would be illegitimate, and the fact the nation knew they did not have this right is why they said at the time of Hanukkah they would wait for the faithful prophet to arise. In this, we should note the nation did not ask for a perfect High Priest. Instead, they used the term "Prophet" as a way to state they were waiting for God to show what He wanted them to do. At the time, the nation seemed to understand any correction they could hope to make would not be truly right but whatever God said they should do would be correct.

When the time came, God sent John the Baptist to be the faithful prophet the nation was waiting for. John, by the direction of God, knew his only job was to step aside and allow The Messiah to replace him. That is exactly what John did, and Jesus stepped forth to take His rightful place. What you will notice is that as Jesus did this, He did not attempt to force Himself into the position of High Priest as it was officially recognized at the temple. Jesus never attempted to usurp the performance of the sacrifices in order to do them Himself, nor did He attempt to stop them. This is important to understand for many reasons. A truth I feel the need to repeat over and over is that Jesus told us Himself He did not come to destroy the Law but fulfill it. (Matt. 5:17) We take this as meaning He came to die, but this was true for His life, no matter how long He might walk this earth directly. This is a point many people do not see and/or gravely misinterpret. The greatest reason I see for why this happens is that we get so caught up on the fact Jesus died, we do not really take the time to see where the path was leading if

He had not.

It is not just a simple moral or church etiquette lesson that Jesus overturned the money changers' tables and drove out those who bought and sold animals to be used for sacrifice at the temple. This incident makes clear the escalating path of reform Jesus was going forward with no matter who liked it and who did not. In taking this action, Jesus showed He did not fear what the religious leaders might think of Him taking authority over the temple and its administration. As pious and regulatory as these men had become on a secular level, and considering their disregard for the spiritual, they no doubt had specifically sanctioned the selling of these animals at the temple. How else can one believe these people were allowed to be there in the first place? Thus, when Jesus drove them out, He did so sighting the legitimate reason this was not to be done in the temple. He did this by pointing out principles from God's Law and the point was not that the temple was for sacrifice but was a house of prayer! (Isa. 56:7, Matt. 21:12-13) While the religious leaders had sanctioned this buying and selling, they feared the people in doing anything against Jesus for driving the activity out when it was clear it did not belong. This is the kind of step by step reform Jesus shows us He was interested in doing, and it would have been a long-term work to get things such as the sacrifices back to being seen correctly.

If we take the time to look at the transition the life of Jesus made in the nation of Israel, we should see it was a very diligent patient transition. One the religious leaders really could not get a handle on how to keep

from happening. This is what forced their hand into making the decision to either accept Jesus as The Messiah or have Him executed. Jesus' entire life was a lesson in patience being a virtue. Jesus was content to simply submit Himself to His earthly parents when they did not understand He belonged in Jerusalem, teaching at the temple, without regard for the fact he was only a boy. However, when He was well within the age category to serve in the priesthood, He began His public work. For this, He did not go to the temple but went mostly outside the temple spending time among the common man. This allowed them to see Him for who He really was. This, along with the fact Jesus had been raised outside the temple's daily operations, gave the people a view of Jesus that assured them what He was did not come from the influence of the religious establishment. If the men administering the temple chose to accept Jesus, they too would have to accept Him for Who He really was and not as a student they could mold into what they thought He should be. This they understood all too well!

Through the years of Jesus' work among the common man He came to Jerusalem and its temple many times, but never once was He invited to stay and/or join the leadership there, muchless become the leader. However, when the moment was right Jesus would enter the temple to begin daily working there. What the day of Jesus' triumphal entry shows us is that Jesus did have support for such a position. In spite of the fact this support obviously came from among the common man, not the religious leadership, Jesus would enter the temple and begin taking patient steps to reform the wrong there. If we understand what Jesus was doing, we should see He did not attempt

to stop the sacrifices because it was never His intent to do so. We also do not see Him attempting to affect how the sacrifices were being performed by the priests, because the first step in reforming the sacrificial ceremony was to begin correcting the way the people brought their sacrifices and how they thought about what they were truly representing at the temple.

This was the true work of a priest. The work of teaching the people, not just administering a static ceremony which without the proper context has no real meaning. (Ezek. 44:23) Of course, Jesus taking action without being invited to do so in any way by the religious leaders has everything to do with the short life and ministry of Jesus, but when we see this, it should strike us that Jesus never acted or reacted as if His time was short! The only argument one can make that He ever did is that a few times, especially near the very end, He warned His disciples His time was short. This was more for their information because He knew they would be stunned by the coming events. While Jesus did not get to show us a great deal many things in reforming the Law or making the drastic transitions in the nation of Israel that God wanted to give the nation, Jesus' death would continue this same work in showing us all how much we will fail by not listening to God's instructions. At the same time, Jesus accomplished the great work of performing the sacrifice of His own body, which would do more to show the truth of God's salvation than two thousand years of shedding the blood of animals!

The chosen nation had faced many struggles, and by the hand of God they had survived those struggles and maintained the

temple service with little interruption. Jesus came because the nation was in a crisis like they had never faced before which would end the sacrifices. If we see Jesus' sacrifice as replacing the ones at the temple, it should not be from the light that God wanted the temple administration to end but that God wanted them to continue. However, without Jesus being accepted as the High Priest, the only way for that to happen was through Jesus' death. As we begin looking at the history of the nation post Jesus' ascension, we see the struggle The Messiah was sent to get them through, a struggle they could not fight on their own but also one they would never have faced if Jesus had been made king. The nation was not punished or rejected for killing The Messiah, the simple result of not taking God's outreached hand of help would be punishment enough. Jesus' death did not bring the necessity for the ending of temple sacrifices, it brought the ability for God's truth, represented through those sacrifices, to continue in spite of the nation's inability to continue.

This is the true blessing of God sending The Messiah. God so loved the world that He committed His oracles to a chosen nation so all the world would never lose the ability to find God's Salvation in a very physical tangible way. (Rom. 3:1-2) Then when that human nation came to the inability to maintain the physical representation they had been committed to, God so loved the world that He sent His son in human flesh to live and walk among us as a man and make what was becoming impossible possible once again. (John 3:16-17) When the same sin that caused the nation not to be able to maintain the things of God

caused the rejection of Jesus, God showed He was prepared for that possibility, and Jesus became the representation of the truth the nation would soon completely fail to maintain. Jesus would then, once again, leave this truth in the hands of men who had been instructed directly by Him, in much the same way God committed His oracles to a chosen nation in the first place.

The ways in which we can draw parallels between what God did with the nation and the way God sent out what we call the church today is why so many believe the church replaced the chosen nation. However, the sad thing in thinking this way is not only do we do it due to arrogance, but that same arrogance is what leads us to make the same mistakes as the nation has already shown us will lead to our destruction. By thinking the church is some kind of replacement, we do not see ourselves as needing to learn why they are not currently administering the Law in the way God originally intended them to. In not seeing things in the correct way we also arrogantly believe that the church, no matter what condition it is in, is what Jesus will accept at His return, and the truth is Jesus' need to return will be caused by the same kind of failures in those who now claim to teach the Gospel that the chosen nation suffered.

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8

in requesting Ishmael and his mother be cast out of the house was an overkill, but it really was not. At this point Sarah understood how much God had been working and timing all this to get things just right. Now the mistake she and Abraham had made was showing itself to be a threat to disrupt all of it. This was not just true at the moment of this feast or in Isaac's younger years, this was a threat that anyone who knows the kind of strife a family can go through when it's time to settle a parent's estate understands. No matter how much this may or may not have been a day by day issue of the two sons being able to work together or just around each other, Sarah was not going to have Ishmael staying in the house as a son, building a sympathetic movement against Isaac that could rise up against him within the house. In thinking about this, we must understand Abraham's house was not just about the idea of having a few things and some money to divide at the end of his life. Abraham had what some would have described as an empire, especially for his day.

Let us not forget that, taking only his own servants as an army, Abraham went after a group of kings who had just defeated a group of kings who lived in Abraham's region. In doing this Abraham so utterly defeated the foreign kings which had taken Lot hostage, he recovered everything that was lost. Abraham was also so unscathed by the incident that when the local king tried to give Abraham all the goods he had recovered, Abraham refused to take any of it. The only thing he allowed was the replacement of very consumable supplies those who had gone with him might have

expended or simply already used during the journey to and from the battle. What this shows us is that Abraham was a man as powerful as any king, if not more so, especially in the region of the world he lived. If having dissension and uncertainty as to who is in charge and going to be in charge can be a great problem in any house, it is that of a king, and in all the ways it counted, Abraham was no less than one!

This very idea is in what Sarah says to Abraham as she points out she does not want Ishmael to be heir with her son. This statement is, of course, part of why people view this negatively from the standpoint that Sarah calls Hagar a bondwoman and Ishmael the son of a bondwoman. Today we take such a statement to being very derogatory. However, this is, again, a point in the Bible where one must take the text in the context of the day and age the event happened. It is easy for us to view a situation from our point of view and see this as demeaning, and certainly when we read where Hagar goes after leaving the house we feel justified in our feeling this. What we do not stop to think about is the actual meaning of the word "bondwoman." We actually have the right thoughts in some ways, but we do not often take it full circle to get the entire meaning. Yes, Hagar is a bondwoman, and in our eyes this is a bad thing because we look at it as being a slave, at least to a degree. The truth is, people became bond servants for a variety of reasons.

Sometimes people came to this state because they owned a debt they could not pay, so they would become a servant in order to repay the debt. Because the

economics of the day were not what they are in our modern world it might be hard to see, but unless a person had specific skills in a trade, it was not easy to work off a debt and then leave for a more independent job of your own. Many people who did not find a way to own land or learn a trade had trouble finding a way to make a living in the first place and would become servants as just a way to make a living. The only reason we have to equate such people's livelihood to being slavery is the fact that once you ended up in this situation, for any reason, it was not often up to you to leave when you wanted to. You were usually in a situation where who you served could make the decision to trade you for someone or something else. This kind of control by certain humans over others is what God wanted to diminish among the chosen nation as He gave them the Law, but God did so without destroying people's opportunity to take this life as a way to make a living.

In the Law, God puts stipulations in about how if one Israelite owned another for the sake of paying off a debt that person was to be treated more like what we would call an employee today. If a person of Israel became so poor they fell into this life, other Israelites were to do what they could to make sure they served someone within the nation and not a stranger. Whenever an Israelite servant was bought by another Israeli, the Law gave a stipulation very important to what we are talking about here, which was that after six full years of service Israelite servants were to go out free in their seventh year. The master was also to allow such a servant to take some goods as their

own from out of the house they worked. (Deut. 15:12-18) This system recognized a servant was truly worth their hire and also encouraged servants to prosper a house they worked in so there would be more benefits to be had in the end. The release of servants would also reset the life of each individual who was a servant in order to give them a chance to go out and find a different life. In many cases, I'm sure there were agreements made for the person to keep working for the person they had been serving, but unless they took the lifetime servant route the Law also provided for, such arrangements would definitely have been more of an employment agreement not any more like slavery than most employment is today.

In any case, if a person felt they needed or wanted to remain a servant, individuals had the chance to go out and find another house to work for. One they may feel they fit into better or would do better at. This brought competition among people who needed servants. They would be encouraged to arrange their household to offer the best they could in order to get the best servants, and servants would do their best because they wanted to get into or stay with the best households. This was about the closest thing to having a system, in which money was not often used as direct payment to employees, which had an owner and employee kind of setup. It was one where everyone had some encouragement to do good and be treated fairly. Of course, this system also meant that if someone was able to do well enough in picking up a trade or some skill while serving another, they may even be able to strike out on their own and be in business for themselves. The point

is, each individual's opportunity to choose for themselves was a blessing to them as well as the nation as a whole.

Now, in the case of Hagar and Ishmael's situation no such laws existed, so we feel bad when we see them being "cast out" of the house of Abraham. However, this leaves us in a bit of a quandary because we would say not having one's freedom is a bad thing, but on the other hand, if we say Abraham was obligated to keep Hagar for life, we are demanding she never be given her freedom. Which one do we choose? Today we understand that in any system where there are not ample opportunities to "find a better job," being fired from one's job, no matter how much we may not like the job, can be a very bad thing. However, is it as bad as being a servant where we would not be allowed to leave our job and possibly be sold off when the master didn't want or need us anymore? Because we can't draw direct parallels between how it is today and how it was then, it's hard to see the situation as Sarah is speaking, but what Sarah was saying is that Hagar was a servant and like any servant she could be sold off. The important point though is that this is not what Sarah was proposing. Sarah wanted Abraham to send them out as free individuals. This was the best case scenario because it would allow them to go and do what they chose to do, not be forced to serve someone else. What more can we ask for?

If we understand all this, it only comes down to two things as to why we might look at this badly. They are first, Abraham's house probably was the best place to work and second, Ishmael was Abraham's son! The first fact has a lot to do

with why Hagar was in such despair after leaving the house. She felt like she had lost the best situation she was ever going to have, and she may have been right on a human level. The basic truth is that we are back at the fact all employers have the right to fire or lay off employees they do not want or feel they need. Governments can try to set laws to protect employees and different systems will work fine and/or need different rules depending on the economy they're dealing with, but we can all still lose a "good" job at times. When it comes to the day we are talking about here, it simply was the most basic system of employers being able to do as they wanted. In Abraham's house Hagar was a servant, and if Hagar chose to, she could go out and be one for someone else. That would be up to Hagar, but Sarah's point was that Hagar's employment in Abraham's house was not so important that she should be kept in spite of the damage her and her son's presence might do.

Thus, the bigger point is the second one, and that takes us directly to verse 11 where we are told the idea was very grievous to Abraham because Ishmael was his actual son. As much as we may want to look negatively on Sarah as if she was being selfish, the truth is, tough times call for tough measures sometimes and mistakes often have painful consequences. All Sarah did was be the voice of reason to Abraham in that Hagar and Ishmael could not be allowed to stay and disrupt Isaac's purpose in the world. This was a choice that Abraham likely would never have made on his own, but it was what needed to be done. This is why it grieved Abraham. He knew Sarah was not just being selfish but that she

was correct. That being said, it's a good thing this was not easy for Abraham because it would have spoken very badly about his character if it had been. God, of course, saw Abraham's grief and understood doing this was something Abraham could have ultimately chose not to do. Even if one argues Hagar belonged to Sarah and she could do what she wanted with her, this was not true of Ishmael!

Only Abraham could choose to send Ishmael away, and this would have been difficult to impossible for him to do. In verse 12 God's words show us Abraham was not grieved over just Ishmael but over Hagar too. Abraham was a great man, and he did not take sending the mother of one of his children away lightly. As any good man would, Abraham saw both these individuals as his family and his responsibility. Thus, God comes to Abraham and tells him not to be grieved at the decision. God confirms to Abraham that what Sarah had said was the right thing to do for the exact reason Sarah had pointed out. As God had told Abraham over and over, Isaac would be Abraham's son to carry on the promise and purpose of God in Abraham's life. Telling Abraham this had come on so many occasions as God kept encouraging him about he and Sarah having a son together. However, God had pretty much always said something such as, a son you shall have with Sarah shall be your heir. Here God can begin to refer to that son by name, because more than just being a name God had given Abraham to call that son, it now was attached to a person Abraham could hold in his arms. As much as Abraham loved both Ishmael and Isaac, it was Isaac he was to be known for having.

It was Isaac whom future generations were to be clear was the primary son of Abraham.

As those who study the Word of God know, Abraham was truly the father of many nations, but we also should be able to see just how important the fact we understand Isaac was the son of promise is! This decision concerning Ishmael had everything to do with that. Abraham would one day be given the very difficult task of obeying God by being willing to take Isaac to a mountain to sacrifice him unto God. Abraham would not know God would order him to stop, he only knew God had asked it of him. (Gen. 22:1-19) Considering all these earlier events makes that story all the more impactful. However, in this story we see Abraham had once before been told he must give up a son to follow the will of God, and that, on some human level, must have hurt almost worse than the thought of sacrificing Isaac. Isaac had always been in God's hands. If it had not been so, Isaac would never have been born. God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in some way was an extension of that fact no matter how painful it might have been. On the other hand, the fact Ishmael was born was Abraham's fault alone. We can blame Sarah for what she encouraged him to do, but, again, this was a choice only Abraham could have made. He made the choice to have Ishmael through Hagar, and now he would have to trust God to take care of that son, and in giving Hagar her freedom send both her and his son out from his house!

Until next time, Shalom!

rope, or extra cloth specifically put at the edges or seams of what they wore. These were items that would cause Israel to be noticeably different. There can be many things said about why you would have these and what they mean, but making this outward sign on your clothing, which God had asked the nation to do, was mostly about being willing to show you were a part of God's plan for the nation. Those outside the nation would be able to easily identify someone of the chosen nation by the fact they constantly wore these, and they would serve to identify others of the chosen nation to you if you were of the nation. This kind of thing was not to be a passing fad for the nation, but a constant mark which would effect how those of the nation went about designing their clothing. If kept, Israel would have had a very ancient and recognizable cultural style. There are some evidences of this stipulation which some Jews do still wear today, but it is not as widespread and consistently used as God intended it to be among the nation.

Next, the Law turns to marriage and the situation of a man taking a woman to be his wife but deciding he does not like her. He may not like her for any number of reasons. However, the man is not to accuse her of not being a virgin when they married if, in fact, she was. A man might find his new wife was not a virgin and simply not divulge it. However, if he comes to dislike the woman, it had better be known by her parents if he wants to use it as a way to divorce her, because in any such case an investigation was to be made. When the accusation was made by the man, the parents were asked to bring what is called

her tokens of virginity. In many cultures it might seem odd that parents would have such a thing, but traditionally the result left from the consummation of a wedding vow was kept. This evidence was to be kept by the parents of the bride in case there was ever a question as to if their daughter was a virgin. In the case of a husband choosing this accusation as the reason to divorce her, the parents could then show she was being falsely accused. In such a case the man was to be fined a hundred shekels of silver, and because he told this lie against a virgin of the chosen nation, this man would never be allowed to divorce this woman all their lives. If it turned out the man was correct and the parents could not produce the evidence they should have, it would indicate she had committed adultery at some point. Because breaking one's marriage vows is not just about doing it after marriage, but about even before, and the punishment is death by stoning. In this case it is to be done in front of her father's house.

In what makes perfect sense, the stipulations go on concerning adultery and its punishment. We are told if a man be found committing adultery with a woman who is already married, both he and the woman are to be put to death. The fact of adultery being committed is obvious in this case. However, the gray area in most people's minds would be when a commitment has been made but the marriage hasn't taken place yet. This is what we might call an engagement, but in days past the agreement was a more serious contract than most think of today. To make it clear, God says that after making such a commitment, if a woman has a physical

relationship with another man, it is to be handled the same way it would be for a married woman. Both individuals are to be stoned at the gate of the city. In this we see how serious God takes what we have committed ourselves to in word, not just our actions. (Matt. 5:37) Whether married or betrothed, by taking this action, a man has violated the commitment the woman has made to another man. The woman has also violated her commitment, unless she was forced. In that case, God makes it clear she needs to cry out when it happens and not wait until the two are simply caught. This is why the stipulation also talks about being in a city. The woman needs a chance to cry out and have someone around to hear her. Thus, the next part stipulates that if the same thing happens away from a public place, such as out in the fields where she has no reasonable chance to have any witness to her distress, only the man will be put to death, and the woman is to be held blameless.

Next, we turn to what happens if the woman is not married or betrothed to any man. In such a case the woman is available to be married. Thus, if a virgin is forced under these circumstances, the man must pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver and take the woman as his wife. He also may not ever separate from her. He has forced her into this, and he is now obligated to stay with her and care for her the rest of their lives no matter what. One part of all this which is important though is that it has to be a known thing. The man has to be caught in the act, or the woman still needs to cry out and/or tell someone right away. Simply making the accusation that a certain

man forced a woman, when there is no evidence it happened, is no way to force a man to marry a woman, and a man can not simply claim to have forced her as a way to get a wife who does not like him and/or the father would not otherwise give.

From there we are given some basic kinds of laws concerning physical relationships and their outcome. We are told a man is not to marry his father's wife. Since it is possible such a woman may not be the man's biological mother, this is not just about prohibiting incest, which is something nature itself should make clear is wrong. This point is also emphasized in the words that talk about the father's skirt. Any woman who has been with a man's father is off limits due to her having been physically connected with the father. Physical relationships that are not correct are a serious thing because of the damage they do emotionally as well as physically, and there is no greater damage done than to the life of a child who is the result of a wrong relationship. This is not to say anything bad about the child, and certainly not an argument for abortion. It is a simple truth that you are now going to bring a child into the world with parents that cared more about their own desires than they did in giving any children they might have, the situation God intended children to be raised in.

The fact this can cause all kinds of problems as to family lines is recognized in the Law as well, and it simply does not matter how cruel some today might think the stipulation is. To the children, marriage

is important, and that's why it's so important it be between two eligible people. The Law in Israel was that a child born to parents who have not made a commitment in marriage was not to be allowed to be a part of the congregation of Israel! Nor was their descendants to be allowed for ten generations. This has to do with the fact that by the giving of the Law the nation was a diverse enough group, it was possible for people of the nation to find others of the nation not so closely related to them that they could have healthy children together. Because it was God's intent to keep the chosen nation distinctly recognizable as a specific people, they were to use this and not mix in a lot of outside blood. This means if you were part of the nation, the primary source for people to marry would be those inside the nation. Now, especially in a day and age before any ability to run genetic tests to determine any close relationship, the only way to know someone was not too closely related was to look back at family records. As children are born to parents who are not married, this becomes far more difficult to do and keep track of. The more it happens the more difficult it will become. God wants none of this to harm the nation; thus, the stipulation that separates out such people from the nation for ten generations. This is not to say the child is to be driven out of the nation, but they will not be allowed to truly take part as a full member of the chosen nation.

This, in turn, would mean the child or any of the descendants within the prohibited generations would not want to marry any individual of the nation who was, and intended to remain, a part of the congregation. All this would likely lead to

the child and/or those descendants leaving the nation for the outside world. If they did not, their family line would have to be carefully tracked as a group separate from the nation in order to determine the generation of children who could re-enter the nation if they desired to. In either case, this simply shows how much the purity in symbolism, and the health of the overall nation, was/is more important to God than simply how many people could be considered part of it. This speaks to the wrong teaching that before Christ's work one had to be part of the nation in order to be saved. God would not have forbid a person from being part of the nation for such a reason if it meant the person and their descendants would be denied salvation along with it! (II Pet. 3:9) We also should be clear on the fact this had to do with the health of the nation in that it comes directly coupled with the stipulation about how a man who had injuries to his reproductive organs was not to be part of the nation. This, again, is not to be cruel to the person, but to keep down the genetic defects such injuries might cause in the person's children. If they chose to go out into the larger world and risk having children, they would be free to do so, and any children they are able to have might very well be perfectly fine. However, any defects they might cause would not be introduced into the much more isolated group of the chosen nation.

These stipulations are then followed by other prohibitions which are very related to introducing certain blood into the nation. An Ammonite or Moabite was not to be allowed into the congregation unless the blood that related a person to those groups was further back in their family line than ten

generations. This is said to be a forever stipulation, but we see on so many levels how much this only had symbolic reasons for it. God talks about nothing that indicates genetic impurity or other health reasons for this. What God does state is that it has to do with the fact these people, being very akin to Israel through Abraham's nephew Lot, not only did not welcome Israel into the region, they resisted them entering by trying to have Israel cursed! As a symbol of how seriously God takes people being an enemy of Israel, He makes it clear Israel is not to make them part of the chosen nation through marrying them. Israel was also not to seek to protect them and certainly not prosper them. The reason for why it is stated so clearly here is because if the reason was not known, following these stipulations would be pointless and only serve to make it seem Israel hated certain people for no reason.

On the completely opposite side, there are those who because of this stipulation and the way Israel might want to look at them due to past events, the nation is told they would not disallow. God specifically mentions the Edomites, who to some might seem to fit into the same category as the Ammonites and Moabites, but they do not. While it's true the Edomites did not welcome Israel into the area, they did not attempt to curse Israel. They were also not committed to attack Israel unless the nation had entered their territory. God would not hold this against them because Jacob, who was the father of the Israelites, had obtained his father's blessing, which originally was Esau's. Esau was the father of

the Edomites and Jacob's elder brother. God was not pleased with Esau, but as a son of Isaac (the promised son of Abraham) God made sure Esau and his descendants had received a place. If they did not want Israel passing through, God would forgive it, and the Edomites were still Israel's next of kin.

The second group God does not prohibit from entering the chosen nation are the Egyptians. On a genetic level Israel already had Egyptian blood in it, for Egypt was the place God used for Israel's family to grow into a nation. While we tend to focus on the idea God had destroyed Egypt to bring Israel out, this was not a sign against the common people of the land of Egypt. It was a Pharaoh that knew not what Israel had done for Egypt that had persecuted the chosen nation. (Acts 7:17-19) A study of history uncovers more and more that this government did not represent the true people considered Egyptians, and it was that government God was really making an example of and bringing down. Israel would show respect for the fact the people of Egypt had, for a time, allowed them to be guests in their land, and in the beginning of it all Egypt was an ally of Israel. Thus, if a person of Egyptian blood was to be married into Israel or wanted to become a part of the nation, Israel was not to prohibit them from joining the nation solely on the basis they were Egyptian.

Let's stay in God's Word!