

# KINGDOM SPIRIT



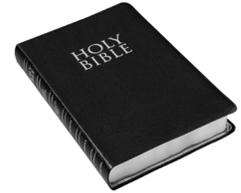
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**“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”**

Matthew 6:33



Issue 1009

## GENESIS 26-28

We ended our Genesis article last issues discussing the birthright that Esau sold to Jacob. I mentioned in closing that there was also a spiritual birthright that we would discuss this issue. In Gen. 1:28, we find two mandates that God gave to Adam. **“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”** The fruitfulness mandate, **“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:”** and the dominion mandate, **“And have dominion over....every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”** These two mandates were passed from father to son from Adam to Noah, to whom they were reiterated in Gen. 9:1, 2. While normally going to the oldest son, Noah appears to have given them to his youngest son, Shem, who then, because he lived much longer than his sons, their sons, etc., passed them to Isaac, who then gave them to Jacob, basically as part of the birthright that he bought from Esau. We’ll see later that Jacob divided the two and gave the dominion mandate, or the sceptre, to his son Judah, and the fruitfulness mandate to Joseph. We’ll discuss this more later, but it will be important in our study to keep this “birthright” in mind as we continue.

(Read Gen. 26:1-11) There was another famine in the land like the famine that forced

Abraham to go down into Egypt. God appeared unto Isaac, and told him not to go into the land of Egypt, but rather to live in Gerar in the land of the Philistines. Abraham had also lived here for a time and because Sarah, his wife, was so beautiful, Abraham instructed her and all of his servants to say she was his sister for fear that the Philistines would kill him in order to take his wife. Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister, but when Isaac resorted to the same trick for the same reason, Rebekah was a cousin, but not a sister. Abimelech, king of the Philistines, happened to catch Isaac sporting (*tsachag* –To laugh, mock, play with) with Rebekah and realized that she really was his wife and called Isaac to him and scolded him for lying about her, telling him that he could have caused great harm to the Philistines since he recognized that God was with Isaac. He gave orders to his people not to harm either Isaac or Rebekah in any way or they would be put to death.

(Read Gen. 26:12-16) Isaac prospered greatly while in the land of Gerar and reopened the wells that Abraham’s servants had dug for Abraham while he sojourned there. Keep in mind that wealth was counted in possessions, not in gold and silver at that time. Abimelech finally came to Isaac and asked him to leave the area as he was becoming stronger than the people among whom he dwelled.

(Read Gen. 26:17-25) He apparently did not go far as we’re told that he next sojourned in the valley of Gerar where he again ran into trouble with the Philistines over rights to water wells. Because they envied him, they plugged the wells that Abraham had dug. He then went up to what

was called in Moses' time, Beersheba, where God appeared to him and re-affirmed some of the promises that He had made with Abraham. (Read Gen. 26:26-33) Abimelech again confronted Isaac, apparently because he was just hearing about the trouble Isaac was having among the inhabitants over the wells.

They agreed not to harm each other and sealed their agreement with a feast. That night, Isaac's servants came to him to inform him that they had struck water on the latest well that they had dug. Isaac named the well Shebah, around which the city of Beersheba (Lit.: Well of the Oath or Well of the Seven) was built.

(Read Gen. 26:34-35) Isaac and Rebekah had wanted both their sons to marry within their own family, but Esau rebelled and took two wives from among the Philistines.

(Read Gen. 27:1-5) Isaac is old and virtually blind and believes that he won't live much longer. Esau being his favorite, as well as his oldest son, he wants to give him a special blessing before he dies. Esau being a hunter, he asks Esau to hunt a deer and to prepare him his favorite venison dish in preparation to his giving him the blessing. However, Rebekah overheard him tell Esau this.

(Read Gen. 27:6-17) Jacob had been anxious to receive the birthright and the responsibility that went with it and Esau obviously did not want the responsibility. But Esau did want the material blessing that would have benefited him right then, or at least so he thought. Rebekah recognized the need for Jacob to have the blessing to support his responsibility of the birthright and immediately set out to get Jacob to steal the blessing. She prepared goat meat the way Isaac liked it, dressed Jacob in Esau's clothing, covered his hands and arms and his neck with goat skin so that he would appear hairy as Esau. Now it was up to Jacob to complete the ruse. (Read Gen. 27:18-29) Jacob took the meat and bread into his father and lied, telling him that he was Esau. Obviously Isaac wasn't sure, so he tested him feeling of his arms and smelling his clothing, all the while Jacob telling him he was Esau. The ruse worked and Isaac gave him the blessing. **"Therefore God give**

**thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."** To me, in giving the blessing, Isaac is basically doing so with faith in God that it will be carried out. Obviously, this was God's plan for Jacob, but because Jacob obtained it by deception, there will be a cost to Jacob and his descendants.

(Read Gen. 27:30-40) Esau was very upset upon learning that Jacob had stolen the blessing, but Isaac believed he could not take the blessing back. Esau begged Jacob to give him a blessing also, which Isaac did, but it was really partly a curse as well. **"Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."** Esau became known as Edom. If we follow Esau's, or Edom's history down through the centuries, virtually every time Jacob's descendants were in battle, or discomfited for some reason, an element of Esau's descendants are involved from their servitude in Egypt to our current servitude to the world banking system.

(Read Gen. 27:41-46) Esau hated Jacob for what he had done and comforted himself by telling himself that when Isaac died he would kill Jacob. Rebekah learned of this and told Jacob to flee to Haran to the house of her brother Laban. It appears however, that he needed the permission of his father Isaac to leave. Rebekah had one other reason for Jacob to go to Haran and she used that to get Isaac to send Jacob away. She did not want Jacob to marry from the girls of the land of Canaan and told Isaac that. She told Jacob that she would send for him when Esau's anger abated, but she was never to see Jacob again as she died while he was away.

(Read Gen. 28:1-5) Isaac responded to Rebekah's request and charged Jacob not to take a wife of the daughters of the Canaanites, but told

him to go to Laban and take a wife of his daughters. He then blessed him and sent him on his way.

(Read Gen. 28:6-9) Apparently Esau had not realized that his marrying the Canaanite women had grieved his parents so much. When he saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Padanaram, he went to Ishmael and married one of his daughters, Mahalath, or Bashemath as she is called in Gen. 36.

(Read Gen. 28:10-15) God confirmed the promises, He gave to Abraham, to Jacob in his dream as he slept. So we know that it is through Jacob that the promises were to be kept.

(Read Gen. 28:16-22) The marginal reference in my Bible, referring to Jacob taking a stone and setting it up for his pillow, means setting it at his head. Jacob is to return to this place, Bethel, when he returns from Padanaram 20 years later and will again anoint a stone here. There is a strong tradition that Jacob carried this stone with him, either from the first time he was here or the second time and that it was carried by the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. The tradition is that ultimately Jeremiah took this stone with him, when he left Judah, to Ireland approximately 2600 years ago. It remained in Ireland 905 years, then it was moved to Scotland for 981 years, then it was placed in the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey where it remained until just recently when it was moved back to Scotland with an agreement that it would be moved back to the Coronation Chair when the time comes to crown a new monarch of the British Empire. The stone has steel rings attached to two sides that staves can be run through to carry it. These rings are very well worn, by tradition, being carried by the children of Israel during the Exodus. It has a number of names, Jacob's Stone, the Stone of Destiny (i.e. *Lia Fail*), Stone of Scone, to name a few. There are many stories and speculations concerning the stone.

It is usually thought that Jacob was a young man, eighteen or twenty years old, at this time. This is not true. We can figure his age pretty close by counting backward. In Gen. 47:28 we're told that he lived in the land of Egypt 17

years and was 147 years old when he died. This would have made him 130 years old when he first came to Egypt. In Gen. 41:46 we're told that Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before the Pharaoh and told him the interpretation of his dream, that there would be 7 very good years and 7 years of famine. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers in Gen. 45:6, they were 7 good years and 2 famine years into the 14 years of the dream which would have made Joseph 39 years old when Jacob was 130 years old. If we subtract the 39 from the 130, Jacob would have been 91 when Joseph was born and Gen. 30:25 tells us that Joseph was born at the end of the 14 years that Jacob served Laban for his wives. So subtracting the 14 from the 91 would make Jacob about 77 at the time that he went down to Padanaram in search for a wife.

Another interesting story concerning Jacob as he traveled to Padanaram is found in the 29th chapter of the book of Jasher. Here we're told that Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, though just a teenager, had been taught well by his father to use a bow and other weapons. When Esau learned that Jacob had gone to Padanaram, he commanded Eliphaz to take with him some of his mother's brothers and to pursue after Jacob and to kill him. Eliphaz and the men that were with him did as Esau had commanded them, but when they caught up to Jacob and Jacob saw what was about to happen, he offered all the gold and silver and goods that he had brought with him, presumably to offer to the father of a wife, to them and was able to talk them into taking it and letting him live. Esau was quite angry when he learned what had happened, but was unable at that time to do any more about it.

This would explain why Jacob had to serve Laban for his wives as we will learn in the next chapter. Based on the story of Abraham's servant having gifts of jewels, gold and silver to offer for a wife for Isaac, I think we can presume that Jacob would have been just as well supplied as he began his quest for a wife. By the time he got to Padanaram, he apparently did not have anything left as gifts for a wife or for her father, so it was necessary that he work for them.

It is also interesting that in verse 14 that God told Jacob that his seed would be as the dust of the earth in number and that they would spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. Israel did not really begin to expand until they had been in captivity to the Assyrians, but we now know that as they began to escape from that captivity, the order and directions that they went were in the order as given here. They first went west into Europe, the Isles and eventually to America, then east into India, then north into Canada, then south to Australia and South Africa. JRL

## PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

(Read Romans 2:28-29) We discussed these verses in our last lesson, but as we begin chapter 3, the opening verse is dependant on these two verses. (Read Romans 3:1) If it is true that one is not a Jew which is one outwardly, i.e. one who is circumcised, but rather one who is one inwardly, i.e. one who is circumcised of the heart, then what is the advantage of being a Jew genealogically? is the question being asked. What profit is there to being circumcised? Paul, in his writing often makes a statement, then he anticipates a question (usually from a Jew) that might be asked concerning his statement as he does here.

(Read Romans 3:2) Paul considers there to be a great advantage to being a Jew of the kingdom of Judah. (Keep in mind here that Paul, when he used the term "Jew" as he does here, he is referring to one who is part of the kingdom of Judah, not of the 10 tribe kingdom of Israel.) He says the main advantage is that the Jews have been intrusted with the written Law of God. We need to understand that God's Law is the outward expression of God's will for man. (Paul doesn't always explain in detail what part of the Law. i.e. commandments, statutes, judgments or ordinances he is talking about, we have to determine this by the context. Here he is talking about the com-

mandments, statutes and judgments.) (Read verses 3-4) The question that he then anticipates is: "What if, even though they had the written Law, they did not believe, or were faithless to it? Would this then make God's faithfulness of no effect?" In effect, he is asking if what God does is dependent on what man does? Can God not act until He sees what man does?

Paul's answer is a very strong "**God forbid,**" or let it not be! Paul, in effect, then makes confession for all men, stating that though all men are liars, God is true. He then quotes Psa. 51:4 to support what he said. Because the scriptures were read regularly in the synagogue, most people would probably have known what this scripture referred to, but for us to understand for sure what he means here, we need to read more of the scripture. This is the confession of David when the prophet Nathan confronted him concerning his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. (Read Psa. 51:1-4) The word "clear" here means blameless.

Keep in mind the question here. Would God remain faithful to man, even though man (the Jew in this case) was unfaithful to Him? Paul has answered in the affirmative, but he anticipates some more questions, or reasoning. (Read vs. 5) If man's unrighteousness establishes, or demonstrates God's righteousness (which is more clearly seen by man's unrighteousness), then would we not say that God was unjust for punishing man for his unrighteousness? For example, if man being sinful makes God look good, why then would God want to punish man. Paul says he speaks as a man, i.e. this would be man's type of reasoning.

(Read vs. 6-8) Again Paul solidly rejects such thinking. How could God judge the world if He were to think in this manner? Today there are people who claim that they are saved by grace, so to them doing work befitting a Christian should not be done for fear that someone would think they were working for their salvation. As a result, they continue to engage in sin intentionally. There were some in Paul's day that were accusing him of this type of thinking, accusations that Paul considered slanderous. He felt it came from the thinking that if God's glory increased through one's sin, then how could God hold the individual

responsible for that sin. He says that a person thinking that way is damned and rightfully so.

(Read Romans 3:9-18) Going back to his answer to the question in verse 1, **“What advantage then hath the Jew?, Paul then asks the question, “are we (the Jews) better than they (the non-Jew)?”** His answer is NO!, he has proven that both the Jew and the Gentile are under sin. He then quotes a number of statements that are found in a number of the Psalms, particularly Psa. 14 and 53, in support of his statement that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin. (Read vs. 19-20) Whatsoever the Law says, Paul says it is saying it to those under the Law, i.e. the Jews. This takes me back to Acts 15 where Paul and Barnabas came before James and the elders in Jerusalem with the argument against the Pharisees who said that even the non-Jew had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved. James and the elders, after hearing the argument from both sides, issued a letter saying that the non-Jew did not have to do as the Pharisees said, but should abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication and in so doing they would do well. I believe Paul is, in effect, saying the same thing to stop further argument and recognize that the whole world was subject to the judgment of God as he then states that **“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”** There is nothing in the law that justifies anyone; it only teaches the knowledge of sin.

(Read Romans 3:21-26) Keep in mind when we discuss the righteousness of God, we are not talking about an attribute of God, but rather the standard of righteousness that is acceptable to God. This standard is now manifested in those who were not under the Law, as were the Jews, and in the Jews also. He says that the Law and the prophets both witness this to be true as this standard of righteousness can only be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ by all who believe. To achieve this righteousness, it doesn't make any difference whether one is a Jew or a non-Jew. **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** But they are justified without any cost through the redemption paid by Christ Jesus.

There are two ways to look at “redemption.” In this verse, either or both ways would be right. When God created the earth and all that is in it, including man, by right of creation, He owned all that He created, again including man. He made man of the dust of the ground—building material that He had created, so He owned man. I would like to quote from a booklet by Dr. Stephen Jones, **“IF GOD COULD SAVE EVERYONE---WOULD HE?”** to explain God's liability to redeem.

In the divine laws of liability God lays down the principle that a man is responsible for what he owns. For example, if a farmer digs a well and neglects to cover the pit, and if a neighbor's ox falls into that pit and is killed, the owner of the pit is liable and must pay damages to his neighbor. Ex. 21:33,34 says, **And if a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his.**

Again, if a man lights a fire and it gets out of hand and burns the neighbor's field, the man who lit the fire is liable, because he created the fire and therefore is its owner. Ex. 22:6 says, **“he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.”** These are basic liability laws that define the will of God in areas of justice and responsibility between men.

This principle, when applied to the big picture, show us that God is responsible for all of His creation—even for the bad things that happen. God is ultimately liable for all the evil that has occurred in the world. One cannot blame the devil, because the devil created nothing and owns nothing. One cannot ultimately blame bad men either, because the bad men did not create themselves.

In the case of the ox falling into the uncovered pit, the one who dug it cannot say in his defense, **“That stupid ox fell into the pit by his own free will”** Such argument makes no difference in the divine court. The only relevant fact in

this case is that the one who dug the pit is responsible for it.

In the case of Adam and Eve, whether these are actual people or just prototype human beings, the Bible story makes it clear that God created them. The “tree” of the knowledge of good and evil (regardless of how men interpret the story) provoked the temptation, and the “serpent” was the tempter. God created both the tree and the serpent and is therefore ultimately responsible for both of them.

That means God, in effect “dug a pit” and left it uncovered. That is, Adam and Eve—like the stupid ox—were told to stay away from the uncovered pit. Of course, they did not obey, and thus man “fell” into the pit and died (became mortal).

So who is legally liable in the divine court? Well, God is, of course. Adam and Eve did not dig the pit, nor did they create the serpent. They were just too ignorant to stay away from the pit. They fell, and they died. God’s own law then demanded that the Owner of the pit pay fully for the death of the ox (Ex. 21:34).

In other words, God set up the law in such a way that He would make Himself liable for the fall of Adam and Eve. Did God know what He was doing? Of course He did. He knew from the beginning that the law would demand that He—the Creator and Owner of all—would have to pay the full penalty for sin. That is why Jesus came to earth to pay the full penalty for sin.

First of all, He loved His creation enough to do this (John 3:16). Secondly, He made it mandatory by law that He would have to do this.

In that sense, the law was prophetic, for it mandated that the Creator would have to take full responsibility for man’s fall—that is, for the ox falling into the pit. In fact, it prophesied that God would have to come to earth and be born as a man in order to be capable of dying for the sin of the world.

(Read Lev. 25:47-55) This is the law of redemption. It is applied in different circumstanc-

es in scripture, but this is the principle of the law. The word “redemption” as used in Rom. 3:24 above, means “loosing away by a price.” Adam and Eve had died as a result of their fall. Since we see that God was responsible, to make things right, He had to loose them away from death by paying the price to do so.

Before we discuss the redeemer, let’s look at the second way to look at “redemption” as used here. (Read Isa. 50:1) This records the selling of Israel (10 tribe Israel) into servitude by God because of their sins. We need to remember that all sin is considered a debt. It damages someone plus God, so the damage incurs a debt. In this case, it was a national sin, a national debt. God sold Israel into servitude to the Assyrians. Also we could consider Judah having a *similar* experience when God put them into the Babylonian captivity. In Israel’s case, their debt ended up being sold then to Babylon, then in both cases the debt was sold to the Persians, then to the Greeks and finally in Christ’s time to the Romans. By God’s Law, as we saw in Leviticus, a person sold into servitude had to either serve until the Jubilee, or they could be redeemed either by themselves, if they had the price to pay, or by a kinsman redeemer.

In either of the ways we look at redemption, only God Himself had the price to pay for the redemption of man, or of Israel. This price was paid in the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. The redeemer had to be a man, born of a woman, had to be a kinsman, and had to have the price of the redemption. Only Jesus Christ qualified. As we look at all that happened throughout the Old Testament, I think we can see that everything was orchestrated by God so that by His Law, He could redeem His people as well as all of mankind.

Hopefully this helps us understand what is meant by Paul when he says that all people are **“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”** Paul goes on, speaking of Jesus, **“whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”** Two different Greek words are translated “propitiation” in the N.T. John uses the Greek word *hilasmos* which means “what appeases.” Paul uses the Greek word *hilasterion* here and al-

so in Hebrews 9:5 where it is translated “mercy-seat.” In both of Paul’s uses of the word, it is referencing the mercy-seat, or the cover, of the Ark of the Covenant where the blood was sprinkled as the means of propitiation or appeasing. Paul is saying here that Jesus Christ is the place where the blood that appeases was sprinkled. What follows in the rest of verse 25 is a slight mistranslation. Proper translation would be as follows: **“thereby to manifest the righteousness of God; because in His forbearance God had passed over the former sins of men in the times that are gone by.”** He continues in verse 26, **“To declare (or manifest—same word as in verse 25), I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”** We need to understand that by redemption, we mean God is using the redemption to set forth Jesus Christ as the place, or the object, of appeasement for all sin to show the righteousness of God, that He might be qualified to justify (make or declare right) all who believes in Jesus.

(Read Romans 3:27-31) Again going back to the beginning of the chapter, Paul has said that the Jew certainly had an advantage, but so far as justification is concerned, he has nothing to boast about. Justification comes through the law of faith, not by any works of the Law. Paul is not doing away with the Law here at all, but rather is pointing out that by the Law, one simply cannot be justified. Justification can only come through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ for anyone, whether Jew or Gentile. If justification could be by the Law, then God would be God only of the Jew. But Paul points out that He is God of the Gentiles, or non-Jews as well. It is the same God that justifies the Jew and the Gentile.

Does faith then void the Law? By no means Paul tells us. Rather it establishes the Law. If we are to serve God, to emulate Jesus Christ, then the Law is our guide, not our Saviour. Thus, the Law is established in our hearts and minds whether we be Jew or non-Jew racially. JRL

*If we ever forget that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.* Ronald Reagan

## GOD’S LAW

FOR  
YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER

We want to continue our discussion of property laws this issue. We were discussing how the law applied to houses in walled cities last issue. They could be sold permanently with only a one year redemption right. If the house was not redeemed in that year, it became the permanent possession of the new owner (Lev. 25:29-31)

The exceptions to this law were the houses of the Levites in their cities. These houses were to be treated as being under the law of the land with redemption rights any time and restoration in the Jubilee. (Lev. 25:32-34)

Also, an exception to the land law was the Levites. They did not inherit any land in the land of Canaan, but they did inherit forty-eight cities. (Num. 18:20-32; Num. 35:2-9)

Being in possession of the land meant you were responsible for it. This included obeying the Sabbath year law in which the land was to be allowed to rest for a year every seven years. God promised to provide enough harvest in the sixth year to carry over to the harvest in the eighth year. (Ex. 23:10-12; Lev. 25:2-7; Lev. 25:20-22)

Lev. 19:19 and Deut. 22:9 both told them not to plant diverse seed, or mingled seed in their vineyard or field. Lev. 19:23-25 tells us that new fruit trees were not to be harvested until the fourth year, and then the fruit is for God and not for them until the fifth year.

Not only were they responsible for the land itself, but for whoever might be rightfully on the property, at least from the standpoint of providing protection from known and or possible hazards. Deut. 22:8 told them to put a battlement or protection on the roof of their house to prevent a man from falling from it. Ex. 21:33, 34 says that if they opened a pit, they were responsible to keep man and animals away from it. If they kindled a fire for any reason and it got away and burned their neighbor’s crops, they were responsible for the loss.

Lev. 25:8-13 outlines the law of the Jubi-

lee. The Jubilee or the Sabbath of Sabbath years was to be declared every forty-ninth year. In this Jubilee, all land was to return to its original owner and all Israelite servants were to be released. (Lev. 25:39-46)

The boundaries of the land are to be respected and protected. Deut. 19:14 says, **“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor’s landmark.”**

A man could sanctify his house, or his field, to be holy unto the LORD. If he did so and wanted to redeem it, the house could be redeemed for the price established by the priest at the time of the sanctifying plus 20%. The field would be estimated by the priest at fifty shekels for as much land as an homer of barley seed would plant if he sanctified it from the Jubilee, but if after the Jubilee, then it would depend on the time left to the next Jubilee. Redemption would be based on the time left to the Jubilee, plus 20% was to be added to it. If it was not redeemed it would go to God in the Jubilee which means the priests would get it. (Lev. 27:14-25)

The greatest way to show one’s sense of responsibility to the land was in obedience to the commandments and judgments of God. (Deut. 11:8, 9, 13-17)

There are several kinds of personal property. One’s wife and children may not normally

considered property to us today, but under God’s law, they are lawful property. Therefore, if a man goes in unto his neighbor’s wife and lies with her, he has technically stolen his neighbor’s very valuable property. God condemns this very strongly and prescribes the death penalty for adultery. (Ex. 20:14, 15, 17; Lev. 18:20; Deut. 5:18, 19, 21; 22:23, 24)

The sexual act makes the woman the wife of a man even if this happens before official marriage. (Ex. 22:16, 17; Deut. 22:28, 29)

Therefore, if a man wants to end his marriage, whatever the reason might be, he must give his wife a written bill of divorcement which, in effect, is a written declaration of disownership. (Deut. 24:1-4)

If a man took an Israelite maidservant to wife, or espoused her to his son, he was to treat her as a wife with all privileges of a wife rather than a servant. If he marries another, he is still not to diminish his responsibility to her as a wife, but if he does, she is to go free without having to be redeemed. (Ex. 21:7-11)

There are more laws relating to property that we will try to complete in our next issue. We are aware that many of these laws would not apply in this day and time, but we do need to consider the principle of them. JRL

**HEAR MY PRAYER, O LORD, AND LET MY CRY COME UNTO THEE. HIDE NOT THY FACE FROM ME IN THE DAY WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE; INCLINE THINE EAR UNTO ME: IN THE DAY WHEN I CALL ANSWER ME SPEEDILY. (Psa. 102:1, 2) Prayer is America’s only hope! As a nation, we must confess our sins and shortcomings, ask for forgiveness, and turn our hearts toward HIM. This has to begin with each one of us.**