Thursday Bible Law Class **Numbers 30**

Vows 6th March 25

Thanks to our Brother Ken who in his introduction explained why the law of vows is given again as a reminder to the nation. This is a new generation who have grown up through the wilderness journey. The generation who were adults coming out of Egypt, but who did not have faith or belief that God was capable of bringing them into the Promised Land had nearly all perished in the 38 years that had passed. The new generation who were children then, or had been born since, were still prone to the lack of faith as their fathers. So it was important to remind them of the standards that God expected from them. In Exodus 24: 7 the generation that came out of Egypt made a solemn promise: *And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.*

They broke the promise almost immediately at the incident of the worshipping of the golden calf.

They did not take the life of service to God seriously. They did not really believe – even thought they had seen and experienced the miracle of the Crossing of the Sea.

Because it is all too easy to make promises we do not keep. Glib words, such as "I will pray for you"… but then forget, or fail in responsibilities of fellowship. How much more is it easy to not keep the vows we make to God – At baptism we declare we believe, and undertake a death, a burial, and then the rising of a new person, but the episode of the golden calf does not take long to come into our lives as we resort to the idolatry of covetousness, (Colossians 3:5) or other sins. Saying we will do something, but actually doing it, are quite different things.

Jesus highlighted this in Matthew 21:28-31 *But what do you think? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but*

afterward he changed his mind, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly I say unto you, That the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

In Leviticus 5:4-5 Israel were warned about not making stupid promises they could not keep: *Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing:*

Failing to keep a promise is sin.

In Ecclesiastes 5:2-6 *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and you upon earth: therefore let your words be few… When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you have vowed. Better is it that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay. Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin; neither say before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?*

In this chapter in Numbers the message is clearly the same. <u>Except exceptions are made.</u>

If a daughter or a wife makes a promise in the hearing of the father of husband, and they agree, only then does the vow stand. However the husband or the father are given the power and right, under the Mosaic law to annul or cancel the promise. The outcome would then be, that if the woman does not keep the promise, she will be forgiven as the husband or father has disannulled it. However if he does not do this, then she is still obliged to keep the promise.

Modern “progressive” women would quickly object to this, as it is sexist, why should man have a right to influence the decisions of the woman? She should be responsible for her own actions. Actually there is a point here, the reason being men have consistently proved that they are irresponsible, and do not live up to the position they were originally supposed to hold – as head of the house, they were supposed to be the protector and guide, and ultimate decision maker. We recall the curse placed upon Eve – Gensis 3:16: …*and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

The nation of Israel were instructed directly by God, and it was hoped that by their behaviour and example other nations would be taught the Gospel of God. The design of the family that God instituted, was that the Husband was the Head of the House, the father, the bread winner, and the Wife to support him in that role, and she was the homemaker, the mother, the teacher. The buck stopped with the man. Any problems in the family, he had to fix it, and sort it. This pattern can be seen in many faithful examples. However, when men failed in their role, the whole family often broke down, - and so it has today. The Bible as the ultimate foundation has been abandoned. Men therefore are not equipped or qualified to pronounce on the decisions of women today, as they are manifestly useless at running their own affairs let alone anyone else’s. As we read in the Psalms

Psalm 11:3 *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

In this chapter of Number the Gospel the Biblical ideal was the foundation of the family.

God, and Christ Jesus underpin every successful and faithful family.

Israel were being taught here that the family is the bedrock of the Ecclesia. The Ecclesia is the Divine Family. God is the Father. Christ is the Husband.

This can be seen in Ephesians 5: 22 -27 *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of*

the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Likewise also: 31-32: *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

As the Bride of Christ, the Ecclesia is supposed to be well behaved, and chaste in all things. But Christ has to sanctify and cleanse… why? Because as we can read in the Song of Solomon, the poor woman is vulnerable, and subject to the temptations and the provocations of the enemies of Christ, and while he is away, the World scoffs and derides and leads the Bride astray to take advantage. In real life – it is us – we are weak and erring creatures, and wander off at the slightest distraction. If it was not for the protection and kindness of a forgiving Husband – Christ Jesus who advocates for us, we would be cut off and disowned.

Often we sin with our mouth. Yet we can be forgiven. Christ Jesus has sacrificed himself so that we can be forgiven – God has in His mercy devised a way, that our vows and vain resolutions can be disregarded- provided we admit, and confess and repent.

Such a simple lesson, shown here in Numbers 30, but sadly lost on many, who so indignant about women's rights, miss the obvious lesson of encouragement and kindness which is actually be taught here.

Brother Terry