

The Ministration Of Death



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The Ministration of Death

Second Edition

Dedicated to all my friends
in the *Father of Love* Facebook chat group.

Thank you for encouraging me and praying for me and
urging me forward to study line upon line and precept upon
precept to reveal that truly our Father is Love.

Printed in Australia by
Maranatha Media
maranathamedia.com

Prepared on the New Moon of December 1, 2016
Updated December 30, 2016

Contents

The Ministration of Death.....	4
Sin Working Death	6
Sin Hides the Father’s Face	7
What Did the Death of Christ Reveal?	8
Christ Pierces the Gloom.....	10
Christ Frees Us From the Fear of Death.....	11
The Cross Explains All the Judgments of God	12
We are Judged as We Judge	14
Preliminary Summary.....	15
The Idolatry of the Golden Calf and its Punishment.....	16
How Do You Read?.....	18
Measuring By the Life and Death of Christ	19
Jesus Manifests the Father’s Name/Character	20
Jesus as Judge	21
Abraham Commanded to Kill His Son	28
Punishing Sin with Sin	30
Elijah and the Use of the Sword.....	32
The Rashness of Moses	39
Given for a Ransom.....	41

The Ministration of Death

2 Cor 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:

What is this ministration of death? It tells us that it is written and engraven in stone. What was written and engraven in stone?

Exo 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

This is the Ten Commandments. So the Bible tells us that the Ten Commandments are a ministration of death. How then do we understand these references to the Law?

Psalm 1:2-3 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalm 119:96-98 I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad. (97) O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. (98) Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

Proverbs 13:14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

James 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

How can a Law that administers death be at the same time a fountain of life and liberty? It all depends on where you stand and what glasses you are wearing when you look at the Law. Paul explains this carefully and in detail in the following verses:

Rom 7:5-14 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (6) **But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.** (7) What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (8) But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. **For without the law sin was dead.** (9) **For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.** (10) **And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.** (11) **For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.** (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (13) **Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.** (14) For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

When we are not aware of the Law, we are not aware of sin; transgression does not appear.

Rom 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

When the Law enters, then sin revives and we come under the condemnation of the Law.

Rom 5:20-21 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Romans 7:9 Paul says that when the commandment came sin revived and I died. How did Paul die and yet be alive?

Rom 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Sin Working Death

Paul died in Christ and then was raised in Christ. For those who believe, they have already passed from death to life. We continue with this process of death:

Romans 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Romans 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

How did sin work death in Paul? The Law made sin appear exceedingly sinful. And what does this achieve?

Roman 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Paul was deeply convicted of his sinfulness. He felt guilty. He saw that he deserved to die. What was it that caused him to see that he deserved to die?

Rom 7:13 ...But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

It is sin that worked death in him *by the commandment*. What does this mean? All the mysteries of the process of salvation are found in the cross of Christ. What was it that worked death in Christ?

2 Cor 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

As the Son of God bowed in the attitude of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the agony of His spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. **He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law.** 2T 203

Sin was working death in Christ by the Father's commandment. The horror that came upon Christ was the realisation of how horrible and destructive sin is. Where does the illumination of this horror come from? It comes from the Law. Does this make the Law the active agent of death?

Rom 7;11,12 **For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.** (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Sin is doing the killing of the soul, yet it does it by deceiving the soul through the commandment. In the case of Paul his faith in Christ allowed him to avoid physical death at that time but in the case of Christ the physical death was not averted. Why was this? Simply because *He died as one who could not see His Father's face.*

Christ yielded not to the torturing foe, even in his bitterest anguish. Legions of evil angels were all about Him; yet the holy angels were bidden not to break their ranks, and engage in conflict with the taunting, railing adversary, nor were they permitted to minister to the anguished spirit of the divine Sufferer. It was in this terrible hour of darkness, **the face of His Father hidden, legions of evil angels enshrouding Him, the sins of the world upon Him, that from His pale lips were wrenched the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"**—Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, January 1, 1887.

Sin Hides the Father's Face

What hid the Father's face? Sin. How does sin hide the Father's face? It portrays Him as one unwilling to forgive. It portrays Him as requiring the death of every transgressor. Where did this idea come from?

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, **it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy. He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God, claims that his decisions are justice, are pure and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God.** CTr 11.4

Satan sat on the judgment seat and instituted a theory of justice that meant every sin must be punished without mercy.

Many were disposed to heed this counsel, to repent of their disaffection, and seek to be again received into favor with the Father and His Son. But Lucifer had another deception ready. The mighty revolter now declared that the angels who had united with him had gone too far to return; that he was acquainted with the divine law, **and knew that God would not forgive.** PP 40

This suggestion meant that when justice is executed that mercy is cut off. In fact this view of justice means that mercy cannot exist at all because every sin must be punished. There is no mercy. Whenever justice is poured out without mercy, it is an expression of Satan's merciless justice system that he invented to smear the character of God and prevent the angels from returning to Him. This false system was abhorrent to God.

What Did the Death of Christ Reveal?

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10 **By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.**{DA 762,3,4}

How did Christ both reveal the love of God *and* the hatred of Satan at the same time? How is the cross a revelation of infinite love while revealing the serpent on the pole?

The sense of the withdrawal of His Father's love pressed from His anguished soul these mournful words: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." 2 T 206

The sins of a lost world were upon Him and overwhelming Him. It was a sense of His Father's frown, in consequence of sin, which rent His heart with such piercing agony and forced from His brow great drops of blood, which, rolling down His pale cheeks, fell to the ground, moistening the earth. 2T 204.1

Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. 2T 210

Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. DA 753

Why did Christ die upon the cross? He died as a sinner will die. Why does the sinner die? When the Law convicts him of sin, he refuses to believe that God would forgive him and therefore dies. Jesus and the Father demonstrated Satan's justice system to the Universe. Christ took our sinfulness upon Him; He felt the terrible condemnation of sin that the Father always intends to forgive in His mercy but for Christ He could not reach out His hand and take the loving hand of His Father because the sinner will not do this and He had to die as sinners die – not believing that God can forgive them.

Gen 4:13 My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. Marginal reading

When Christ took upon Himself our sinfulness, it hid the Father's face – Sin hid the Father's face, not the Father hiding His face. The difference is critical. He was eager to show mercy but sin covered His face so that Christ cried out:

Mat 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

This is the cry of the man carrying all our sins. Why did He speak these words? He spoke these words because He was made sin for us. Sin took occasion by the commandment and slew Christ.

Christ Pierces the Gloom

As Christ was about to expire, all that Christ knew of the Father pierced the darkness as in a moment and He said:

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

He felt utterly condemned and overwhelmed and at the very last moment He determined to believe that the Father would receive Him even though it felt impossible.

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. {DA 753.2}

No eye could pierce the gloom that surrounded the cross, and none could penetrate the deeper gloom that enshrouded the suffering soul of Christ. The angry lightnings seemed to be hurled at Him as He hung upon the cross. Then "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" As the outer gloom settled about the Saviour, many voices exclaimed: The vengeance of heaven is upon Him. The bolts of God's wrath are hurled at Him, because He claimed to be the Son of God. Many who believed on

Him heard His despairing cry. Hope left them. If God had forsaken Jesus, in what could His followers trust? DA 754

Suddenly the gloom lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpetlike tones, that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried, "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast, and died. {DA 756.2}

That cry that pierced the darkness and took hold of Father is our salvation. The light that encircled the cross is evidence of our acceptance with God from the pit of Hell. His victory is ours. His death revealed Satan's justice system and His faith piercing the cloud of our sin accomplished our salvation. How was it accomplished? He trusted that the Father would still receive Him even though every fibre of His being said it was impossible.

It is the same faith that was manifested in Abraham when he was bowed down with terrible suffering at the thought of taking the life of his son. As he went into the darkness he determined to believe that God would make it work together for good and keep His promises.

It is the same as the Canaanite woman who was faced with the silence of Jesus and what appeared to be a statement that she was a dog. Sin hid His face from her. What sin? It was the racial hatred of the Jews and Canaanites for each other. This sin hid the face of Jesus from the woman, yet the Spirit of Jesus in her, pierced the hiding of His face, and she spoke the glorious words:

Matt 15:26-27 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Christ Frees Us From the Fear of Death

When Adam sinned he was introduced to Satan's merciless justice system that every penalty must be punished and as God had said that to eat of the tree meant death, Adam received the idea that God would surely put Him to death. This put Adam in a cage of bondage.

Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The Son of God came to break the power of death by piercing through the gloom of Satan's merciless justice. On the cross He came down to where man stood. Man stood in the place of believing that our iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. In this very place the Son of God commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father. In taking this action He shattered Satan's kingdom. Yeshua our Saviour exploded the lie that the Father would not receive us. And so we read:

Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured--the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face--speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, **It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise.** DA 755

In taking our nature, Christ placed Himself where man stands in believing that God has merciless justice and from this place He gave Himself to His Father believing He would be accepted despite all His feelings.

Dear Lord Jesus how wonderful you are. You are the way, the truth, and the life. You have exposed the serpent on the cross and revealed his merciless justice system and revealed that the Father is willing to accept us.

The Cross Explains All the Judgments of God

Once we understand the cross we can then understand many stories that appear severe and frightening.

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father." {GC 652.1}

The story of the cross teaches us that it was sin that works death through the Law. By this we mean that the sinner does not believe that God forgives sin. Yeshua broke the dominion of death by standing in that domain and choosing to believe the Father accepted Him. This totally shattered the lie about the character of God as a merciless judge. It revealed that sin was the destroyer; sin caused the Father's face to be hidden; sin prevented the hand to reach out and believe in forgiveness. It was sin that moved the Pharisees to condemn Jesus; it was sin that caused Pilate to compromise with the Jewish leaders; it was sin that caused Judas to betray Him; it was sin that hung Jesus on the cross.

Why then does this lie of our Father being a merciless judge live on? It is because Satan turns the cross around to be the action of God.

Isa 53:3-4 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

The cross reveals to us the amazing love of the Father but sin through the Law deceives us and causes us to believe that God demanded death to satisfy His wrath against sin. Not only that He demanded it but that God Himself killed His Son. Isaiah 53 tells us that we look upon the cross this way. When we read the judgments of God in the Old Testament as sinners being struck down by God Himself we are revealing our understanding of the cross. When we esteem those who died as smitten of God and afflicted then we agree with Satan that God has merciless judgment by using lethal force on those

who transgress Him. Every event in the Bible where people die through judgment we are called to look upon the cross. Why is this?

Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. **The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.** Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. **When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God,—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death,—it is said that “His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.” “In all their affliction He was afflicted: ... and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”** Judges 10:16; Isaiah 63:9. – Ed 263.1

Our Father and Lord Jesus are not willing that any should die. It causes them immense pain to see sinners lost.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

We are Judged as We Judge

Why don't all come to repentance? It is because they don't believe God can forgive them. Note carefully that our judgment of those punished in the Old Testament and the final death of the wicked will be the system of judgment that we will use on ourselves.

Matt 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

For all the stories in the Bible where judgments are falling on people, if we read these stories as God no longer offering them forgiveness but withdrawing His hand of mercy in order to destroy them, then this is how we will judge ourselves when the conviction of sin comes to us through the Law.

Please don't miss this point. God sends us conviction of sin to save us. If we believe that God reaches a point where He withdraws that offer then we

won't be able to endure the time of Jacob's trouble. Our sins will crush us as they are revealed to us. We will be tortured by our sinful lives through the Law but those who have chosen to believe that the hand of mercy is always extended it will never be too late to pierce the darkness of our condemnation and be saved. How I pray you will grasp the significance of these words. They will prove your salvation or damnation depending on how you choose to respond to them.

The Bible tells us:

Psa_86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Psa 100:5 For the LORD is good; **his mercy is everlasting**; and his truth endureth to all generations.

God's mercy is everlasting. It does not end at any time. It only ends for those who don't believe in it.

Psa_86:13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

What is the lowest hell? It is the place where you feel certain you can't be forgiven. God can deliver you from this if you believe it.

Preliminary Summary

So let's summarise what we have considered thus far:

1. The Law ministers death to the man in sin and life to the man in righteousness. Rom 7:5-13
2. The carnal man accepts Satan's lie that transgression must be punished with death and that it is pointless asking for forgiveness. Gal 3:10
3. The Law convicts of sin in order to give mercy, but the carnal man understands condemnation as a prelude to certain death. John 16:8; Gen 4:13 (margin)

4. The mercy of God is everlasting. Ps 100:5. The sinner condemns himself to death and destruction. Rom 1:32; Gen 4:13 (margin); Num 14:28
5. Christ exposes Satan's lie through His death on the Cross. Through death He destroyed him who had the power of death. Heb 2:14
6. Christ took our sins upon Himself and died as the sinner dies to reveal that sin causes death. 2 Cor 5:21
7. In the position of the lowest torturous hell Christ trusted Himself into the arms of the Father thus shattering the dominion of death. Matt 27:46; Luke 23:46
8. Humanity naturally looks upon the cross as a judgment directly from God and continues to believe Satan's lie of merciless justice. Isa 53:3,4
9. All stories of judgment in the Bible are revelations of the cross for Christ has been afflicted in all the affliction of humanity. Isa 63:9. How we judge those stories is how we will be judged. Matt 7:2

The Idolatry of the Golden Calf and its Punishment

Let us now apply these principles to one of the stories of the Old Testament.

Exo 32:26-28 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. (27) And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. (28) And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Now notice the commentary of the Spirit of Prophecy

Moses requested all who had been free from this great sin of idolatry, to come and stand by him at his right hand; also, those who had joined the rebellious in worshiping this idol, but who had repented of their sin in so quickly departing from God, to stand at his left hand. **There was quite a large company, mostly of the mixed multitude, who instigated the making**

of the calf, who were stubborn in their rebellion, and would not stand with Moses, either at his right hand or at his left. Moses then commanded those at his right hand to take their swords, and go forth and slay the rebellious, who wished to go back into Egypt. **None were to execute the judgment of God on the transgressors only those who had taken no part in the idolatry.** He commanded them to spare neither brother, companion, nor neighbor. **Those who engaged in this work of slaying, however painful, were now to realize that they were executing upon their brethren a solemn punishment from God; and for executing this painful work, contrary to their own feelings, God would bestow upon them his blessing.** By performing this act, they showed their true feelings relative to the [252] high crime of idolatry, and consecrated themselves more fully to the sacred worship of the only true God. 1SP 251, 252

The true general then takes his position for God. He has come direct from the presence of the Lord, where he pleaded with Him to turn away His wrath from His erring people. Now he has another work to do, as God's minister, to vindicate His honor before the people, and let them see that sin is sin, and righteousness is righteousness. He has a work to do to counteract the terrible influence of Aaron "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother, that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day."

Here Moses defines genuine consecration as obedience to God, to stand in vindication of the right and to show a readiness to carry out the purpose of God in the most unpleasant duties, showing that the claims of God are higher than the claims of friends or the lives of the nearest relatives. The sons of Levi consecrated themselves to God to execute His justice against crime and sin. 3T 300,301

To summarise some key points

1. The people were offered repentance for their sins.
2. A large company refused to stand with Moses. They did not repent and accept forgiveness.
3. Moses commanded those who had not taken part in the idolatry to take up their swords and slay the rebellious without regard to feelings.
4. This was a solemn punishment from God.
5. It was a painful work that if performed would bring them a blessing.
6. It defined genuine consecration and obedience to God.

The natural response to this story is to conclude that these people were smitten of God and afflicted. It is also natural to conclude that these people deserved to die because not only did they worship a false god they stubbornly refused to repent. Natural justice tells us that God had to kill them to preserve the nation because they would not submit under any circumstances.

It appears to be an open and shut case. It is at this point that it would be natural to draw the conclusion that God stood as an executioner towards these high handed sinners and even though it wasn't pleasant, it had to be done. It was best that these 3000 die rather than the whole nation perish. John 11:50.

How Do You Read?

For those preaching the message of the Third Angel we are instructed to follow Miller's rules of Bible interpretation.

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:--

"1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will

be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. **To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence;** and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible."

The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth. RH, November 25, 1884

Measuring By the Life and Death of Christ

We are not following Miller's rules of interpretation if we form our conclusion before we have brought all the pieces together. Two very big pieces that must be included is the life and death of Jesus. What does the life of Jesus tell us about the judgements of God?

Heb 7:26 For such an high priest became us, **who is holy, harmless, undefiled**, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; **because he had done no violence**, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

"Herod and the wicked authorities killed the Just One, **but Christ never killed anyone**, and we may attribute the spirit of persecution—because men want liberty of conscience—to its origin—Satan." Ms62-1886.64

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Yeshua never harmed anyone, He was never violent and never killed anyone. We can also be certain that Christ is the same throughout Scripture. What was the mission of Christ in coming to this world:

...the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of [11] Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured

the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. **The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father.** "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. Steps to Christ 10,11.

The earthly mission of Christ was to reveal the Father and to remove the falsehood that God is a severe and unforgiving Judge. In the most beautiful prayer of Jesus we hear him say:

John 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Jesus Manifests the Father's Name/Character

The name of God is His glory and His glory is His character.

Isa_42:8 I am the LORD: that is my **name**: and my **glory** will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Heb 1:3 Who being the **brightness of his glory**, and the express image [character] of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

As we are told in Steps to Christ, Jesus came to this earth to reveal the whole character of the Father. As Jesus told Philip:

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

Jesus told Philip that his observation of the ministry of Christ qualified him to know exactly the character of the Father.

God has left nothing undone that He could do for us. **He gave a perfect example of His character in the character of His Son;** and it is the work

of Christ's followers, as they behold the incomparable excellency of His life and character, to grow in His likeness. As they look unto Jesus and respond to His love, they will reflect the image of Christ RH, Feb. 15, 1898.

The whole character of God was revealed in his Son. ST Dec 30, 1889

Jesus manifested the name or character of His Father completely. Therefore all the stories of the Bible must include an understanding of the life of Jesus on earth. He was harmless, non-violent and never killed anyone. That is the revelation that has been given to us of the Father through Christ.

What did Yeshua say about the use of the sword as a means of protection?

Matt 26:52,53 Then said Jesus unto him, **Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.** Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Yeshua told Peter to put away the sword and that He would trust in His Father to protect Him with His angels.

Jesus as Judge

What about examples of judgment in the life of Jesus? What do we see?

Matt 23:31-38 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. (32) **Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.** (33) **Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?** (34) Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: (35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (36) Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen

gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (38) **Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.**

The leaders of the Jewish nation refused to accept Yeshua as the Messiah. This rejection would lead to the entire nation being rejected as His chosen people. This means the whole nation of Israel was under threat because of these apostate leaders. Now would be the time to use the sword if Jesus would use one because the nation needed to be saved! Wouldn't it be better for 3000 or so leaders of the Jews to be slaughtered so that the whole nation would not perish? How did Jesus respond?

Matt 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Jesus would send them prophets and wise men to plead with them and finally Jesus would leave them to their own devices.

Matt 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. **By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will.** The horrible cruelties enacted in the [36] destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control. GC 35.3

Another example in the life of Jesus of Judgment is His cleansing of the temple.

John 2:13-16 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, (14) And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep

and doves, and the changers of money sitting: (15) And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; (16) And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

This example describes how Jesus executes judgement. Let us follow the commentary in the Desire of Ages.

1. Conviction of Sin

With searching glance, Christ takes in the scene before Him as He stands upon the steps of the temple court. With prophetic eye He looks into futurity, and sees not only years, but centuries and ages. He sees how priests and rulers will turn the needy from their right, and forbid that the gospel shall be preached to the poor. He sees how the love of God will be concealed from sinners, and men will make merchandise of His grace. **As He beholds the scene, indignation, authority, and power are expressed in His countenance.** DA 157

2. Inmost thoughts and motives are read and guilt causes silence

The attention of the people is attracted to Him. The eyes of those engaged in their unholy traffic [158] are riveted upon His face. They cannot withdraw their gaze. **They feel that this Man reads their inmost thoughts, and discovers their hidden motives.** Some attempt to conceal their faces, as if their evil deeds were written upon their countenances, to be scanned by those searching eyes.

The confusion is hushed. The sound of traffic and bargaining has ceased. The silence becomes painful. A sense of awe overpowers the assembly. It is as if they were arraigned before the tribunal of God to answer for their deeds. Looking upon Christ, they behold divinity flash through the garb of humanity. The Majesty of heaven stands as the Judge will stand at the last day,—not now encircled with the glory that will then attend Him, but with the same power to read the soul. His eye sweeps over the multitude, taking in every individual. His form seems to rise above them in commanding dignity, and a divine light illuminates His countenance. DA 157, 158

3. Commanded concerning the sinful action.

He speaks, and His clear, ringing voice--the same that upon Mount Sinai proclaimed the law that priests and rulers are transgressing--is heard echoing through the arches of the temple: "Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise." {DA 158.1}

4. Condemnation of sin and destructive force used on inanimate objects reveal God's displeasure.

Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested, He overthrows the tables of the money-changers. The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. None presume to question His authority. None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. **Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hand that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword.** Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence. {DA 158.2}

5. The people run away rather than ask forgiveness.

A panic sweeps over the multitude, who feel the overshadowing of His divinity. Cries of terror escape from hundreds of blanched lips. Even the disciples tremble. They are awestruck by the words and manner of Jesus, so unlike His usual demeanor. DA 158.3

Jesus does not use any violence on the people. Through the Law they are convicted of sin. Rather than turn to Him in repentance they run away because of the human perception of justice without mercy. Jesus wanted to cleanse their hearts but they refused repentance and ran away and so only the physical temple was cleansed. Sin deceived them by the Law. Yet, No one was killed by Jesus or violently attacked. The cleansing of the temple shows how the Father judges, for Christ reveals His Father.

Another example is the cursing of the fig tree.

Matt 21:19-20 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. (20) And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

The fig tree was an example of judgment.

Christ's act in cursing the fig tree had astonished the disciples. It seemed to them unlike His ways and works. Often they had heard Him declare that He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They remembered His words, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. **His wonderful works had been done to restore, never to destroy. The disciples had known Him only as the Restorer, the Healer. This act stood alone.** What was its purpose? they questioned. DA 582.2

God "delighteth in mercy." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Micah 7:18; Ezekiel 33:11. To Him the work of destruction and the denunciation of judgment is a "strange work." Isaiah 28:21. But it is in mercy and love that He lifts the veil from the future, and reveals to men the results of a course of sin. DA 582.3

The cursing of the fig tree was an acted parable. That barren tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a symbol of the Jewish nation. The Saviour desired to make plain to His disciples the cause and the certainty of Israel's doom. For this purpose He invested the tree with moral qualities, and made it the expositor of divine truth. DA 582.4

The example of the fig tree is very important as a symbol of judgment. Jesus might have commanded his disciples to cut down the fig tree with axes and sword. He might have broken off all its branches and burned it with fire. He might have opened the earth and swallowed it. But He simply spoke to it and the water in the tree was removed causing the tree to wither. Water is a symbol of the Spirit and the water was withdrawn from the tree showing us how the Spirit of God is withdrawn from the sinner. In these two examples of the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree we have demonstrated the judgment of God in His Son. Note carefully above that the

Spirit of Prophecy says this act stood alone in a work of destruction. Therefore this parable shows you how God destroys; He withdraws His Spirit.

Let us come back to the story of the Golden Calf and now consider some more points. A critical question to ask is whether the Levites were filled with the Spirit of God when they slew the 3000 men. Were the Levites in the New Covenant or the Old Covenant? What had all the Israelites said a few weeks earlier?

Exo 24:7 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.

When God offered Israel the New Covenant in Egypt what was the uniform response?

Exo 6:8,9 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

None of the Israelites believed the promises of God. There is no record to indicate that the Levites were separate from the rest of Israel in the murmuring and complaining. There is no record to indicate that they were righteous. They were all in the Old Covenant which is the ministration of death. Therefore the Levites were operating in that context.

Another important question we need to ask is why was Israel commanded to use swords? Jesus told Peter to put his sword away. Why would Jesus command the Levites to take up swords and kill their brethren? Where do we see the physical sword first mentioned in Scripture?

Gen 27:40 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.

Isaac told Esau that he would live by the sword. Esau never accepted the new covenant. He lived his entire life in the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is a life living by the sword.

So why did Jesus command the Levites to slay the idolaters? Again we come to the words of Christ:

Matt 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

The work of the Law within the ministration of death is to cause sin to abound. This means that whatever man is thinking, the Law will magnify that thought and bring it to light. Notice again what the Scripture tells us on this matter:

Eze 20:25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;

How does our Father in heaven who is good give us anything that is not good? The answer is that He allows us to be judged by our own judgment. When God's people stray from His commandments, the merciless justice system of Satan is allowed to manifest itself. This justice system is not good but God allows it to come in order that men's sins are punished with their own sinfulness.

The Lord said of the children of Israel, "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols, wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." **Because of continual disobedience, the Lord annexed penalties to the transgression of his law, which were not good for the transgressor**, or whereby he should not live in his rebellion. 1SP 265.2

In the book *God's of Egypt as Lightning from Heaven* we noticed that the command to stone people to death was an Egyptian practise (Ex 8:26) that the Israelites adopted (Ex 17:4) and was then included in the Torah. (Lev 20:27) Why? It is because they were judged as they judged. When men refuse to come into the New Covenant and be judged in mercy they remain

in the Old Covenant to be judged by their own judgment. Why then is it presented as God commanding it? The Law enters that sin may abound. As men in their carnal state hear the Word of God they see their own face in the Law.

James 1:22,23 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. **For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:**

A man in the Old Covenant deceives himself even as sin by the Law deceives us and slays us. Why does God allow this? He lets our own thinking judge us and then offers us mercy by inviting us into the New Covenant. The ministration of death written in stone speaks condemnation and death to us. In this place if we turn to God believing He will help us, then we can come into the New Covenant. If we don't believe He will help us then we die according to our own judgment.

Abraham Commanded to Kill His Son

To illustrate that thought come to the command to sacrifice Isaac.

Gen 22:1-2 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*. (2) And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Why was Abraham tested on this point?

God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. **But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar.** That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. PP 147

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it **was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds.** The

field of the controversy between Christ and Satan--the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out--is the lesson book of the universe. **Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings.** God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. PP 154

Abraham still had remnants of distrust in His heart that needed to be removed. Is it possible that Abraham had a fear that God might ask him to yield up his son? Was Abraham familiar with human sacrifice?

"The Canaanite was then in the land." Abraham had reached the goal of his hopes to find a country occupied by an alien race and overspread with idolatry. **In the groves were set up the altars of false gods, and human sacrifices were offered upon the neighboring heights.** While he clung to the divine promise, it was not without distressful forebodings that he pitched his tent. PP 128

Maybe it was just that he feared something would happen to his son. In either case a fear that something might happen to Isaac was a fear that God would not fulfil His promise to him. Was it something similar to the experience of Job?

Job 3:25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

The fact that Abraham was afraid to tell his wife about the command suggests that he was not sure if he would bring his son back. In the few days journey to the place of sacrifice Abraham wrestled with his doubts and then finally surrendered and trusted God completely.

Remember the work of the Old Covenant is to show us in a mirror our sinfulness. As everything of Abraham's future depended on the life of Isaac, Abraham would have faced fears of his son's future and God tested him on

this fear as to whether He would trust God. If Abraham had trusted God then he never would have faced this test. The Law can't mirror what is not there.

We see a similar test in the story of Solomon and the two women:

1 King 3:25-26 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. (26) Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.

The command to use the sword reveals what is in the heart. As Solomon commanded the child to be slain with the sword that he might reveal what was in the heart of the two mothers, so God commanded Abraham to slay his son that He might reveal what was in his heart.

Punishing Sin with Sin

At another level, this judgement came from God according to his own judgment. Abraham had taken the sword to defend his nephew Lot and as he had lived by the sword he was now called to die by the sword in offering up his son. So this command of God did not come without a context. Notice what Ellen White says:

Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, "Thou shalt not kill," and God would not require what He had once forbidden. PP 148

If this promise was to be fulfilled through Isaac, how could he be put to death? Abraham was tempted to believe that he might be under a delusion. In his doubt and anguish he bowed upon the earth, and prayed, as he had never prayed before, for some confirmation of the command if he must perform this terrible duty. He remembered the angels sent to reveal to him God's purpose to destroy Sodom, and who bore to him the promise of this same son Isaac, and he went to the place where he had several times met the heavenly messengers, hoping to meet them again, and receive some further direction; but none came to his relief. Darkness seemed to shut him in; but the command of God was sounding in his ears, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." That

command must be obeyed, and he dared not delay. Day was approaching, and he must be on his journey. PP 148.3

This is a critical point to consider. When God tested Abraham in asking him to slay his son, did God ask him to do something arbitrary? No, it is directly related to the issues where he is afraid and where he does not trust God. In order to bring Abraham fully into the New Covenant He must meet him in the Old in order to confront his sin. This resolves the apparent conflict in these words:

Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, "Thou shalt not kill," and God would not require what He had once forbidden. PP 148

How can God command something that He had once forbidden? The Law is our school master to bring us to Christ. Gal 3:24. The Law enters that sin might abound, Rom 5:20. God gives us over to judgments that are not good according to our thinking in the Old Covenant in order to bring us into the judgments that are good in the New Covenant.

Another point to consider is that our doubts and fears cause us to misread the words of God. Note the following point:

Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and **he obeyed the command to the very letter.** {PP 153.3}

If Abraham obeyed the command to the very letter then God must have only required Abraham to offer his son but not kill him. Abraham did not kill his son but inspiration says he fulfilled the command *to the letter*. This distinction is important because God did not slay His Son but He did offer Him up. We see a parallel to this in the story of the Canaanite woman. Jesus said it is not right to take the children's food and give it to dogs. Matt 15:26. She thought He called her a dog but Jesus was testing the racial prejudice in her and the disciples. She might have answered that said she was a child of God

and still received the promise but she understood that she was a dog and even then she believed and received her request. In the book of John we see many examples of people misreading the words of Jesus. With Nicodemus, the woman at the well and the feeding of the 5000 and other places the people all misunderstood Jesus and made His words seem impossible. This is a human trait that the law exposes when it enters.

Once we understand this magnifying sin principle we can better appreciate what is taking place in the story of the slaying of the 3000 with the Golden Calf. Let us look at the story of Elijah to further illustrate how God's commands are misread and at the same time still fulfil His will.

Elijah and the Use of the Sword

This process of the use of the sword is also seen in the ministry of Elijah.

1 Kings 18:40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Again the voice of Elijah is heard in startling words of command to the people: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." The people are ready to obey his word. They seize the false prophets [286] who have deluded them, and bring them to the brook Kishon, and there, with his own hand, Elijah slays these idolatrous priests. 3T 285.1

The judgments of God having been executed upon the false priests, the people having confessed their sins and acknowledged their fathers' God, the withering curse of God is now to be withdrawn, and He is to renew His blessings unto His people and again refresh the earth with dew and rain. {3T 286.1}

We are told that the judgments of God were executed on the false priests. What more do we learn? -

God wrought through Elijah when He destroyed the prophets of Baal which kindled the fires of hell in the heart of Jezebel to avenge the blood of the priests of Baal. Such a triumph had been gained to the God of Israel, that it stirred up the powers of darkness, and she resolves, yes

swears by her gods that Elijah shall die, but she does not consider there is a God who is above her, who will only permit the agent of Satan to work out her own ruin. 1888 488.1

Notice it says that God *wrought through* Elijah when he destroyed the prophets of Baal. Did the actions of Elijah reflect the character of God's kingdom? To answer this question we discover something very interesting in the life of John the Baptist who came in the power and spirit of Elijah:

Matt 11:2-3 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, (3) And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Why did John, the greatest of the prophets, have a crisis of faith?

Like the Saviour's disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. **He had pointed to the Messiah as the One** whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and **burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.** **Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire.** {DA 215.2}

Neither John the Baptist, the disciples of Christ or Elijah understood the nature of Christ's kingdom. Is this a surprise to us? Notice what we are told of the angels:

The heavenly intelligences were prepared for a fearful manifestation of almighty power. Every move was watched with intense anxiety. The exercise of justice was expected. **The angels looked for God to punish the inhabitants of the earth. But God said, I will send My Son.** Perhaps they will reverence Him. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life.” **Amazing grace! Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save the world.** “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
Ms166-1898.27

So even the angels before the time of Christ’s first advent did not understand fully the character of God. If this is true of angels then what can we say of men? Returning to Elijah we ask the question, when did Elijah first begin to comprehend the nature of God’s kingdom?

To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire:" and after the fire, God spoke to the prophet by "a still small voice." 1 Kings 19:11, 12. So Jesus was to do His work, not with the clash of arms and the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice. DA 217.2

So it was not until after the Mt Carmel incident that Elijah began to understand that God was not in the fire. Even so after this event did Elijah fall back into his old understanding?

2 Kings 1:10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

This event happened after Elijah ran away to Mt Sinai and was shown that God is not in the fire. Jesus Himself tells us that Elijah was not representing the kingdom of God when he called down this fire on those men.

Luke 9:54-56 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? (55) **But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.** (56) For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

God wrought through Elijah for the destruction of the prophets of Baal but He punished the sin of the prophets of Baal with the sin of Elijah in the use of the sword.

When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin. PP 728.1

Ahab should not have allowed the prophets of Baal to prosper, so God allowed a series of circumstances to unfold that would punish sin with sin. Now remember that because John the Baptist misunderstood the kingdom of God he had a crisis of faith. The same thing happened to Elijah. After the Mt Carmel experience he expected a reformation to immediately take place and it did not because the actions of Elijah were not representative of the kingdom of heaven.

What did Elijah see? Did he see by faith the promises of God? Did he recount his faithfulness in every past emergency? No, the dark shadow of Satan in his agent Jezebel was athwart his pathway, threatening him with cruel death. He did not look through the shadow heavenward. Human terror amazed, and paralysed his mind, and he was so terribly disappointed on Israel's account that he arose and went for his life, in disappointment and sorrow bending [489] his uncertain steps, he knew not whither. {1888 488.3}

A little before, in the strength of the power of God, he was full of zeal and intensity of interest for apostate Israel, running before or at the side of the chariot of Ahab. He was to vindicate the glory of God. He was to challenge apostate Israel either to serve God fully or Baal fully. But now the man seems as weak as other men. There was no particular word he had heard from the Lord, directing him to take the course he had taken, and there was no purpose to his steps. Distracted by doubts and uncertain whither his way was tending, he pushed this way and that for his life, but God did not forget Elijah. He wrought for His servant, He inquired of him, "What doest thou here Elijah?" 1888 489.1

This history carefully and prayerfully studied will be a help to the people of God under difficulties. Let man be careful not to assume

responsibilities that God does not require of him, and interpose himself between the Lord and His tempted and tried ones so that the purposes of God shall not be carried out in the experiences of these persons. 1888
489.2

Elijah's doubt and confusion came because he misunderstood the kingdom of God. As Ellen White stated:

To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, *when* "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; DA 217.2

It was only after Mt Carmel he began to understand the nature of the kingdom of God. Elijah has assumed responsibilities not given to him and it caused him disappointment and failure. Yet we remember that "God wrought through Elijah when He destroyed the prophets of Baal." So how did God work through Elijah in this situation? Notice the following statement:

The priests of Baal witness with consternation the wonderful revelation of Jehovah's power. Yet even in their [154] discomfiture and in the presence of divine glory, they refuse to repent of their evil-doing. They would still remain the prophets of Baal. Thus they showed themselves ripe for destruction. That repentant Israel may be protected from the allurements of those who have taught them to worship Baal, **Elijah is directed by the Lord to destroy these false teachers.** PK 153,154

In the command of God we find the ministration of death. God pronounces the sentence of death for the prophets of Baal. As we have learned, the intention of this sentence is to encourage those sentenced to seek for mercy. The refusal to seek for mercy only comes from a wrong conception of God by those sentenced and therefore they bring judgment on themselves when the Lord withdraws from them. We see in the story of Moses what happened when God pronounced sentence against Israel:

Exo 32:10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

This command is a test for Moses and how does Moses respond?

Exo 32:11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Moses pleads for the people when God indicates that He will consume them. Why didn't Moses simply accept the command? Why would he dare to appeal against the judgment of God? What is interesting is that when God said He would consume Israel, Moses asks for mercy but when He is given the sentence to destroy a little later he moves ahead with the sentence.

Exo 32:27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

When the Lord issued the command to slay the prophets of Baal was He inviting Elijah to intercede for mercy for these men? Was He also seeking to bring forth from Elijah his inner feelings towards these men?

1Ki 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and **slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.**

Was it possible that Elijah felt deeply about the fact that his friends were killed by these prophets of Baal? Had he been afraid and discouraged because they tried to take his life? Did the fire coming down from heaven appear to justify the action of killing these men with the sword? When the sentence of death was given by God, did Elijah take responsibilities upon himself that he was not given and did he reveal his deeper feelings of negativity towards these prophets that were hidden inside him? Did the command to slay the prophets of Baal magnify the sin inside Elijah of a possible motive of revenge for the slaying of the prophets of God and destroying the nation with idolatry?

James 5:17 **Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are**, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

If Elijah was subject to like passions as we are could he have been tempted to seek revenge for the killings of God's people and possibly those who were his good friends? Would you be tempted with revenge if a close friend of yours was killed, especially if you didn't understand the nature of God's kingdom?

Elijah was instructed to slay the prophets of Baal because this was the ministrations of death and a fulfilment of the Old Covenant process. Elijah was *not* instructed to slay the prophets of Baal *with the sword* but God *wrought* through these actions to punish Israel as well as to confront him with his own deeper feelings that were not in harmony with the law of God.

Secondly there is no command in the Torah to use the sword to execute justice on the guilty. The sentence of death for those worshipping a false god was to be stoned to death.

Deu 13:6-10 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; (7) Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; (8) Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: (9) But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. (10) And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

What Elijah did was contrary to the Torah in regard to how to deal with idolatry. What Elijah appealed to was tradition, the tradition of Israel to use the sword. In the woman caught in adultery we see how the Law giver intended this sentence of death to be applied. It was to give mercy to the repentant.

The Old Covenant sentence punished the sin of the prophets of Baal with the sin of Israel's use of the sword and at the same time brought Elijah to realise his own deeper feelings. How else do we explain the sudden fear of Elijah in the face of Jezebel? This failure on his part reveals that Satan had been allowed access to him in some way? How else is it possible to reconcile Elijah's use of the sword with the words of Jesus?

Matt 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

The character of Jesus reveals that He would not use the physical sword and when Peter used it, He healed the man who was struck and rebuked Peter. The place Jesus wanted Peter to put the sword was out of his hand. He wanted Peter to be like Himself who never used a physical sword at any time.

The Rashness of Moses

Did Moses have a similar experience to Elijah? We remember that Moses did not understand the nature of God's kingdom when he slew the Egyptian.

Moses was too hasty in slaying the Egyptian. He supposed the people of Israel understood that God's special providence had raised him up to deliver them. **But the Lord did not design to accomplish this work by warfare, as Moses thought, but by his own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to him alone.** Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to bring about his purpose. ST Feb 19, 1880

The deliverance of Israel was not to be accomplished by warfare. Not one part of this mission from Egypt to Canaan was to be done in this way. Spirit of Prophecy calls this a rash act. Did Moses act rashly when he told Joshua to take up swords and fight the Amalekites?

Exo 17:8-9 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. (9) And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Exodus 17:9 should read that Moses asked the Lord what to do but it doesn't say this. Did the attribute of rashness manifest itself here again? It is true that Moses was put in a terrible position. The children of Israel did not trust him or God and they complained about everything and even wanted to stone Moses. Yet having once taken the sword to defend Israel against Amalek, the sword would now come into Israel and many of them would die by the sword.

When we come to the story of the golden calf do we see this attribute of rashness once again?

When Moses saw the idolatry of Israel and his indignation [301] was so aroused at their shameful forgetfulness of God that he threw down the tables of stone and broke them, Aaron stood meekly by, bearing the censure of Moses with commendable patience. **The people were charmed with Aaron's lovely spirit and were disgusted with the rashness of Moses.** But God seeth not as man sees. He condemned not the ardor and indignation of Moses against the base apostasy of Israel. 3T 300

God knew the heart of Moses even though he acted rashly. God wrought through Moses to awaken Israel to the wickedness of their sin. When Moses took the sword to deal with Amalek he was standing in the sins of his fathers and doing what any natural man would do and that is to defend his family. This action of Moses was not alone in him. It also would have existed in the Levites who slew the rebellious. Like the Levite Phineas who put a Javelin through the sinners who were causing a plague to descend on them, these Levites revealed their abhorrence of idolatry and the wrong actions of their brethren. God wrought through them to punish the sins of Israel.

The iniquities of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation were now visited. God only commands in the Law that which the Levites were thinking in regard to how this should be dealt with. The Lord tests the faithfulness of the Levites because of their past faithlessness in not accepting the New Covenant. The blessing that came to Abraham in obeying the command to slay His son was that it cured his lack of trust in God and this blessed the world in showing an example of the Cross.

When Israel sinned with the Golden Calf the Law entered and caused their sin to abound. Their past sin in using the sword as a nation was now being visited upon them through the Old Covenant. The blessing that came to Israel was to realise how sinful sin really is while at the same time learning to be obedient when it is difficult. Yet again we stress that at no time were any of these Israelites in the New Covenant. At no time were they filled with the Spirit of Jesus as they slaughtered these people because there is no violence in the Spirit of Christ.

The Lord was offering forgiveness through Moses when he asked them who is on the Lord's side. When these people refused to repent, they had to face their own understanding of judgment. The sin of using the sword was magnified through the Law and God punished sin with sin.

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Israel bowed down to an idol and God visited their iniquity with the iniquity of the use of the sword. They had to live like Esau in order to survive.

In the telling of the 3000 men that perished we have a parallel to the experience of Christ on the cross. Jesus wanted to save these men but they refused to repent. They refused to reach out and believe that God could forgive them. Like Christ they died under the condemnation of sin. Unlike Christ they did not commend themselves into the hands of the Father because they did not trust Him.

Given for a Ransom

And so we see the cross in the death of these men because grace was freely available to them but they didn't take it. Their death caused Israel to tremble at the danger and severity of sin and this humbled the people and invited them to come into the New Covenant. As Egypt was given for the ransom of Israel (Isa 43:3) so the 3000 were given to awaken Israel to turn to God and

seek forgiveness. As it was sin that crucified Christ, it was sin that destroyed the 3000 at Sinai. As Christ felt the condemnation of sin through the Law so did those who refused to come to Moses and be saved. Sadly because they would not accept the cross of Christ they had to die on their own.

If we see that God inflicted death on His Son because of sin then we will see that God inflicted death on the 3000 at Sinai. If we see that sin killed Christ as He became sin for us and this caused the Law to be presented as condemning without hope, then we can see that sin killed these 3000 men at Sinai for the same reason. I urge you not to see these men smitten of God and afflicted but rather receiving condemnation through the Law according to their own perceptions of God and the Law.

This process is clearly explained by Jesus.

Mat 25:24-30 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I **knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:** (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. (29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The outer darkness is where Jesus was on the cross. It is the condemnation of sin without hope of forgiveness. The man with one talent could have been forgiven but he believed the Lord to be a hard man and so it was impossible.

Through the combined stories of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist within the framework of the character of God revealed in Christ, we can begin to understand what happened with the command to execute those who rebelled and refused repentance with the Golden Calf.

The ministration of death is glorious. It has power to bring people in the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, while at the same time bringing death and destruction upon those who refuse to accept their sentence, in a manner that is according to their own judgment. The wisdom of our Father in this is amazing to me. I want to be brought fully to the New Covenant. I am thankful for the Old Covenant that convicts me of my sin and condemns me to death. Yet since I see the love of the Father as ever merciful and I trust that Jesus has overcome that condemnation then I rejoice to come into the New Covenant in Christ and know that I am fully forgiven and granted the righteousness of Christ as my inheritance.

Each day when I am convicted of sin, I thank Father for the Old Covenant that has power to show me my great need and cause me to see I will die. I then rejoice to be pointed to Christ where I receive righteousness. Both covenants are working for my salvation. One kills my old man and the other brings me forth in the resurrection of Christ my Lord.

The Ministration of Death

Why Did Jesus tell Peter to put away his sword but tell the Levites to go through the camp and slay those who refused to repent?

Exo 32:26-28 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. (27) And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. (28) **And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses:** and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

And what do you make of these comments?

Those who engaged in this work of slaying, however painful, were now to realize that they were executing upon their brethren a solemn punishment from God; and for executing this painful work, contrary to their own feelings, God would bestow upon them his blessing. 1SP 252

How do we harmonise these things?

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father." GC 652.1

As we examine the cross we see that truly the ministration of death is glorious and ushers those who trust the promises of God into His Righteousness